



Studies
on the History of the
HUNGARIAN TRADE-UNION MOVEMENT

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Edited by **E. Kabos–A. Zsilák**

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Translated from the Hungarian by Alex Bandy

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FOREWORD

A noteworthy aspect of social life today is the vigorous upswing of the trade-union movement in practically every part of the globe. The organizationally weak, primitive craft or workshop associations of the industrial workers of early capitalist Europe which were contemptuously ranked by the ruling classes as police cases or, "patronizingly", as charity cases, have since grown into enormous organizations spanning nations and continents. This strength of organization is not only felt and known by the hundreds of millions of members, but the various forces of social and political life take it into consideration as well – of course all in their own way, differently in the socialist, the capitalist and the developing countries.

This several hundred million strong mass of organized workers does not constitute a homogeneous unit. Neither organizationally nor ideologically nor as regards its fully or partially conscious politico-economic endeavours. However, it would be an error if, along with the occasionally quite obvious signs of discord, we failed to notice behind them those tendencies which, according to the law of contradiction, do, in fact, point towards unity. It was life itself which, in the course of historical struggles, has always compelled the fraternal, or even rival organizations (or detached groupings within an organization), to seek contact, to take common positions and a united stand on various matters, whether they have been local, national or international.

The study of the historical path of the trade-union movement – in its national and international aspects – convinces us that the drive towards unity, the tendency to cooperate, is part of the very *essence* of the movement. This was what, at the beginning, led the individual worker to view his fellow worker as one suffering the same fate rather than as a hostile competitor, that is, as one with whom he must join forces against their common exploitation. This urged workers, who, out of the occasional cooperative groupings, made their first attempts to organize, to establish permanent self-protective economic and educational organizations which gained rapidly both in material and moral strength. This led the organizations to the road along which their activities expanded into a class struggle and their dimensions grew beyond the workshops and the crafts, the urban and, eventually, the national boundaries to encompass ever broader sectors of both blue and white collar workers.

In the course of this complex and arduous historical process, the creative power and resourcefulness of the working class and its allies have proved inexhaustible. This creative power has produced and continues to produce an extensive variety of forms and methods in the different countries and different periods. The task of historical research is to unearth and publish all this in order to provide an opportunity for its lessons to be learned.

The most effective way for Hungarian historians to contribute to the world-wide dissemination of this historical experience and its lessons is by studying the Hungarian workers' movement. The study of the history of trade unions rests on certain traditions in Hungary where, as in several other countries, it originated within the movement itself and, for a long time, was practised only there. There was practically no attention paid by bourgeois historiography in Hungary to the workers' movement and its trade unions and their increasingly influential role in society.

Within the individual unions, however, the need for historical hindsight, for the derivation of the lessons of the already travelled path, had developed quite early.

Already in the eighties and nineties of the past century, short historical surveys began to appear, initially within the pages of the workers' press but, following the turn of the century, in independent pamphlets and small books as well. Studying these works today, we can speak with appreciation of the worker-historians' noteworthy endeavours. These spirited combatants and writers of the movement, without any experience in the writing of history and in lack of adequate source materials, left to us such works which, in their own time, were certain to have been effective aids towards the workers' collective self-consciousness and which even today are not only honoured mementoes of that one-time movement but are also indispensable sources for contemporary historiography. It adds to their significance that they give a perspective of an initial period which is difficult to reconstruct, of the life of the pioneering organizations, of those transitory formations which led from guild movements to trade unions and, further, they make known the methods, circumstance and mood of an increasingly many-sided trade-union life and work which developed within the socialist workers' movement. Such early works were published on the history of the organizing of the shoemakers, housepainters, teamsters and other crafts.

One of the best pieces of pre-World War One trade-union history was László N. Novitzky's *Egyesült erővel* (With united strength) (Budapest 1912), a considerably lengthy volume recording the already half-a-century old printers' movement. This was the first such work in Hungary, based on extensive research, with a wealth of documentation, giving a detailed picture of this union's history within the context of the entire contemporary Hungarian workers' movement.

Besides the movement's own historians, mention must be made of one exception, a pre-war bourgeois author whose work was noteworthy in respect to Hungarian trade-union history. Imre Ferenczi, a lawyer and social-political advisor at City Hall, sympathetically and attentively dealt with the workers' movement in scholarly works. From the viewpoint of trade-union history, his

Munkásaink szakszervezeti joga és mozgalma történeti kialakulásában (The historical development of the trade-union right of our workers and their movement) (Budapest 1906) is particularly important. His other studies, on strikes, unemployment and social-political questions, also contain considerable data on union history.

During the counter-revolutionary period between the two wars fresh trade-union histories appeared within the workers' movement. For their anniversaries, some unions published official accounts of their historical milestones, primarily for their own members. Such histories were put out by, for example, the Central Federation of Iron and Metal Workers, the National Federation of Food Industry Workers, and the National Federation of Leather-craft Workers. Besides these, there also appeared non-official, larger-scale works. Manó Buchinger, with the preparedness of a mature Marxist and with excellent literary skill, revealed a most instructive history in his *A magyarországi könyvkötő munkások szervezkedésének története* (The history of the organizing of the Hungarian bookbinders) (Budapest 1927). Ernő Grósz wrote the second part of *Egyesült erővel* (Budapest 1927) which dealt with the recent 25 years of the printers' union. József Takács wrote of the agrarian workers' movement, Imre Szabó of the carpenters' organizing and Miklós Kertész dealt with the development and activities of the International Federation of Trade Unions (Amsterdam International).

The most significant product of pre-Liberation (1945) trade-union literature was Samu Jászai's *A magyar szakszervezetek története* (History of Hungarian trade unions) (Budapest 1925). Its very subject matter makes it important. This was the first work which endeavoured to give a historical picture of the *entire* Hungarian trade-union movement from the time it first took shape in the 1860's, through the next sixty years to the 1920's.

As we can see from these examples, between the two wars it was mainly the recognized leaders and functionaries of the social-democratic movement who were writing trade-union history in Hungary. Knowing the situation, this is understandable, but it is further understandable that this fact determined the character of these works as well. Undoubtedly they had much to say of their subject, of the unions' past, but, most important, they show the changing line of this leading cadre – a change that was not to its advantage. In comparing this literature with pre-World War One trade-union histories, although noting the development in style and presentation, we also see the lowering of the political-ideological standard of the social-democratic leadership. In pre-1914 union histories the movement's original, fighting radicalism gained forceful expression, whereas in post-1919 works this is barely noticeable. The memory of the defeated socialist revolution and the reality of the counter-revolution terrified the social-democratic historians. Their fear of the terror of the counter-revolution and their aspiration to be assimilated into the relatively stable new system were reflected by making the old, splendid fighting traditions appear to be dull, by belittling them, in that they said nothing positive about the revolution and were

far from sparing in their anti-communist declarations. Although the accounts did vary according to the authors' individual temperaments from the arbitrary handling of the subject through the aspects left unsaid to the judgements by way of insinuations and slanders – all reveal the essence: the whitewashing of the movement into an institution "respectable" for the bourgeois order.

Of course, after the defeat of the Republic of Councils, no large-scale histories of the movement could be produced within the ranks of the newly and illegally organizing Communist Party. This does not mean, however, that the ideological practice of communists at home and in emigration totally lacked historical perspective.

On the contrary, the communist leaders and ideologists passionately analysed the movement's past decades, particularly the revolutions of 1918 and 1919, primarily with the aim of discovering the causes of the Republic of Council's defeat. This historical analysis was considerable in regard to the unions as well, unearthing details valuable to this day and stating conclusions that have stood the test of time. However, a not insignificant one-sidedness was also present. And if we rightly passed judgement on social-democratic trade-union histories written between the wars on account of their prejudice we must do likewise with the conclusions of the communist authored union histories of that time.

However surprising it may be, the communist analyses of the unions based themselves on the accounts of social democrats. As mentioned earlier, the leaders of the social-democratic movement attempted to mould the unions' past to their own present attitudes; most communist ideologists of this time took this sterilized picture for reality, making it worse by noting several negative manifestations experienced during the revolutionary period while disregarding significant, positive aspects. The *evaluation* of the essentially similar picture was of course diametrically opposite: the unions' alleged reluctance to struggle and lack of revolutionary values was put in an approving, smug light by the social democrats whereas the communists viewed developments with bitter accusations (and often with similar scorn for the leadership).

This ahistorical conception, strengthened from both sides, influenced negatively the cause of workers' unity during the period between the two wars and it even extended into the post-Liberation era. For quite a while it prevented the regenerated Hungarian historiography from viewing the unions' past with due attention and scholarly attitude.

A modern and scientific Marxist-Leninist study of Hungarian unions, free from distortion, has only been carried out in the past two decades. This work is simultaneously progressing on several levels, according to the organizational structure of the movement. The multi-levelled research and publications complement and presuppose one another, being mutually perfected in a constant inductive and deductive interrelationship. Its main areas are the individual national trade unions' own histories as well as the synthetization of the overall history of the national trade-union movement. Research of union events on the regional and plant levels is going well with good results.

One outcome of this extensive research is the growing number of publications. The first up-to-date, large-scale work is Tibor Erényi's *A magyar szakszervezeti mozgalom kezdetei* (The beginnings of the Hungarian trade-union movement) (Budapest 1962) which deals with the origins, activities and growth of the capital's workers' societies into a national organization between 1867 and 1904. This work was followed by Miklós Habuda's monograph *A magyar szakszervezeti mozgalom a népi demokratikus forradalomban 1944–1948* (The Hungarian trade-union movement and the People's Democratic Revolution, 1944–1948) (Budapest 1971) surveying the strengthened and expanded union movement and its crucial role in the transformation of society in the post-Liberation period. The subject matters of the two works are separated by a great time gap and a treatment of the interval years is under way; four works are due to appear in the next few years. Short studies have already been published on various particular aspects of that intervening period. Some of them were in a collection of essays under the title *Tanulmányok a magyarországi szakszervezeti mozgalom történetéről* (Studies on the History of the Hungarian Trade-Union Movement) (Budapest 1969).

As mentioned before, an independent study of individual unions is being conducted paralleling the overall research of the movement as a whole. The unions themselves encourage and financially assist the historians in this task. Without listing a detailed bibliography, the following indicates the results: the publication of a two-volume work on the agrarian movement, the volumes on the pre-1918 organizing of the catering industry, on the struggles of the miners between the wars, on the trade and banking employees, and an account of the teachers' socialist movement. Several unions (constructions, leathercraft, food industry, chemical workers and public employees) published selected documents from their histories, in most cases prefaced by a historical sketch. Presently under way are the histories of the iron and metal, construction, clothing and textile workers and printers. Of course, the scholarly and literary standards of these works vary. However, in every present case, whether it is a work on the movement in general or a particular study or a collection of documents or studies, there is evidence of an earnest desire to relate the facts and to break with prejudices. The complex interrelation of the fratricide and the simultaneous struggles for the re-establishment of unity within the working-class movement in the past carries a lesson for the present, too. Precisely on this account, Marxist-Leninist historiography is critical and self-critical in its examination of the past. The indisputable merits of the unions' social-democratic leaders are recognized without reserve, revealing all aspects of the social-democratic era. This makes it possible to have a scientific critique of the age and to judge errors according to the demands and possibilities of the given time. Furthermore, nowhere are the errors of the communists camouflaged, and the consequences of the mistakes are frankly stated. In this way we can show that historical truth, despite the mistakes, is on the side of the revolutionary forces and that the century-old Hungarian trade-union movement, despite considerable weaknesses and inconsistency, has done well in

fulfilling its tasks. It has always served the workers' interests, their liberation, their material and cultural development and the cause of international unity, which it continues to do today.

We are confident that our readers will agree once they have acquainted themselves with these studies which give us an idea of the results of recent investigations into the history of the Hungarian trade-union movement. This volume does not claim to present a century of the Hungarian trade-union movement in its totality and continuity. Each essay is complete in itself and not part of a larger work. In assembling this collection we did not leave things to chance, rather, we tried to present each period of this century from one or more specific aspects. Thus the individual studies are linked up and collectively they outline the lifespan of our unions.

The Hungarian trade unions have developed and are developing in the midst of international pressures but in accord with the situation here at home and they express locally as well as universally determined social needs. We have therefore made use of international comparisons as well as giving the Hungarian social background to problems where these had a role in the shaping of our unions. These studies attempt to clarify for the reader exactly why events occurred in the way they did, what characteristics and methods of work do Hungarian unions have in common with the general pattern, and what similarities and differences exist.

For example, one author gives a broad outline of the main types of European union development for his study on the origins of Hungarian trade unions. Not only does this shed further light on local roots and characteristics but, right at the outset, also indicates the eventual problems of historical development.

We place great emphasis on the political orientation of the unions particularly in terms of Hungarian conditions. It is not by accident that every essay pays attention to this, while two specifically focus on it, one in regard to the Social Democratic Party, the other to the Communist Party.

The unions carry out economic, social and cultural activities within the larger context of the whole of society and the movement has learned to pay attention to events and their significance in order to react to them or to influence them. This collection deals with this particular aspect when discussing the period between the wars, treating this extraordinarily complex era by analyzing three especially "sensitive" points: (1) the development of the characteristics of the relatively stabilized counter-revolutionary order, (2) the great economic crisis and its local effects and (3) the stage of the anti-fascist and anti-war struggles.

The changes in the social position of the trade unions, their role and, in many respects their scope of duties, pose a specially exciting series of questions in the period when the working class comes to power and begins to build socialism. We have three essays examining this problem; they are in the singular position of being able to analyse the events of two historically quite dissimilar periods: one, the revolutions of 1918–1919 and the first Hungarian dictatorship of the proletariat and two, the people's democracy initiated in 1945 and the following

socialist transformation. Both periods are uncommonly rich in historical lessons, the application of which is our present task.

We hope that this collection will be instructive reading for all. We believe that the writing of history may also contribute to the strengthening of the already mentioned tendencies toward unity that lie within the union movement.

Ernő Kabos

THE ORIGINS OF THE HUNGARIAN TRADE-UNION MOVEMENT

by
Tibor Erényi

At the time of the 1848 Revolution, Hungarian industry was still in its infancy: guild handicrafts dominated over factory type industry. Due to the immaturity of the productive forces and the backward social conditions, handicraft-based manufacture, uniting the workers' labour within the same workshop with a systematic division of labour, appeared later in Hungary than in Western Europe, and it never did attain the same significance as in the West, or, later on, in Russia. From this it follows that, at the time of the 1848–1849 bourgeois revolution and war of independence, the numerically small, undeveloped Hungarian working class could not raise independent class demands as was done, for example, in France. The backwardness of class relations within Hungary and the exclusively agrarian character of the country did not make it possible for the workers to take an organized stand even in favour of bourgeois democratic demands. There was no trace of any working-class movement comparable to England's Chartism. The ideas of utopian socialism reached certain intellectual circles in Hungary but not the workers.

The most far-reaching workers' demand in 1848 was the termination of the guild system. Conflicts within the guild crafts sharpened during the thirties, parallel with the deterioration of the living conditions of the workers. Disregarding guild regulations, indeed, in spite of them, workmen's associations and various ad hoc groupings came into existence to fight for the improvement of work conditions. During the first years of the last century, these ad hoc associations in Pest (Budapest only came into existence in 1873 when Pest, Buda and Óbuda were united) demanded also wage increases in several instances. At the time of the revolution, which began on March 15, 1848, the earlier ad hoc societies, "alliances", were replaced by other forms of organizations. Intellectuals began to appear in the workers' ranks, voicing liberal, or even radical, views and taking the lead in the struggle for improved work conditions. As a result of this, a certain polarization set in among the organizing circles of Pest's workers. The moderate element essentially represented the views of the liberal nobility leading the revolution. They pressed for the abolition of the "guilds as obstacles to the development of free enterprise" and at the same time emphasized that "our movement does not wish to, and will not, disturb the present order, our sole aim is peaceful transformation" In contrast to this, the plebeian forces, the radicals

active in the ranks of the workers who supported the revolutionary democrats, did not reject the "disruption of law and order"; with the slogan "Bread for the People!" they organized demonstrations and strikes in the interest of improved work conditions.

These early workers' demonstrations reached their climax during the spring months of 1848. In no less than twenty-five petitions, the workers of the various crafts demanded a 10½ hour working day instead of the usual 13 to 15 hour one. The same number of petitions contained also wage increase demands. The workmen of fourteen guilds demanded the reform of guild regulations. The actions were led by elected committees, usually consisting of the most respected guildsmen, but the names of one or two intellectuals can also be found in their registers. During the revolution it was these committees that represented the workers whose awareness was beginning to grow, and in this respect, they were the forerunners of trade unions.

Neither the petitioning, nor the strikes of April–July, encouraged by radicals, led to the abolishment of the guild system, not even to its radical reform. The most significant of the apparently solid achievements attained during the spring of 1848 was the collective contract concluded on May 23rd between the printers and their employers with the mediation of the revolutionary democrat Mihály Táncsics, a great spokesman for the workers' cause. This was the first such document of the Hungarian workers' movement (it included a 10 hour working day).

Outside the three cities of Pest, Buda and Óbuda, which increasingly tended to run together, in 1848 only in one or two provincial towns did the guildsmen attempt to fight for the improvement of their work conditions. Even these attempts were abandoned, however, with the beginning of the 1848 autumn military operations and the consequent state of emergency.

The defeat of the revolution cut off the development of an independent bourgeois Hungarian state and, with it, dealt a blow to the workers' movement as well. The limitations on the growth of Hungarian capitalism between 1849–1861 prevented the large-scale development of Hungarian manufacturing industry. The political system of the country – a redressed Habsburg absolutism – did not allow any possibility for the development of a legal socialist movement and it almost completely isolated the Hungarian workers from the West-European socialist and revolutionary movements. However, the most significant achievement of the revolution, the liquidation of feudal conditions, could not be reversed. The decade and a half following 1849 saw the growth of capitalist industry despite the limitations, resulting in the relatively rapid numerical expansion of the working class. Between 1849 and 1867 the number of workers doubled and began to approach 300,000. The number of workers was growing particularly fast in the factory type plants of the food and machine industries. As the manufacture type workshops had not been developed, the mass of industrial workers came from the ranks of craftsmen and the agrarian proletariat. There is no evidence whatever for a workers' movement of a socialist nature at the time of

the rule of Habsburg absolutism on account of the country's political conditions and its isolation from abroad. In the sixties a few sick-relief units were formed, but in the main these were the creation of the bourgeoisie. Nor can the printers' association, that was reorganized in 1861 after its 1848 beginnings and was under the employers' control, be considered an independent organization of workers. Its function was strictly limited to relief and aid activities financially supported by the printing shop owners. According to the charter, the society's funds came partly from the enrolment fee and partly from "the gifts of the managers and other benefactors". The charter was approved by the Viceregal Council in the summer of 1862.

There were only nine relief groups and thirteen Catholic and one Protestant journeymen's associations functioning in the whole of Hungary, according to the February 17, 1867 report of the Viceregal Council submitted to Franz Joseph. In Buda, Óbuda and Pest, the printers, the shipyard workers of Óbuda and the journeymen stonemasons had relief units. To this we must add the Pest-Buda printers' self-education group formed in 1865, left out of the report obviously by error. Although it may be presumed that some other groups operated without official sanction, the facts indicate that previous to 1867 there was no trade-union movement in Hungary and the workers' sporadic attempts at independent organization only reached the initial stage, that of the relief societies.

The year 1867 was of towering significance in the history of the Hungarian workers' movement and, thus for the trade-union movement as well. The Compromise between Austria and Hungary[1] and the formation of a Hungarian parliamentary government were immediately followed by the development of the social-democratic movement in Hungary, which, by the turn of the century, had reached great masses of workers.

Compared with the pre-1867 period, this unexpectedly rapid development can be traced to the fundamental changes taking place in both the economic and political life of the country.

The accelerated industrial growth of post-1867 Hungary was slowed down for about a decade by the 1873 economic crisis, only to be followed by a new upswing later on. In 1873, the number of those employed by industry was about 360,000, in 1880 it was 400,000 and in 1890 it reached 480,000. In 1880 approximately 110,000 and in 1890, 160,000 workers were employed in large industrial plants in

[1] The absolutistic, repressive rule of Austria, or rather, of the Habsburg dynasty, over Hungary did not only obstruct Hungary's national development, but, at the end of the 1850's and even more in the sixties, it became the source of a number of increasingly obvious political, military and economic difficulties also in Austria itself. This led to negotiations between the representatives of the Austrian and Hungarian ruling classes. The agreement reached after a delay of several yars, early in 1867, is generally called "The Compromise" in Hungarian history. Bourgeois reforms took effect in Austria and the dualistic Austro-Hungarian Monarchy came into being. The Compromise opened the road for the further growth of Hungarian capitalism within certain limits. The Austrian Emperor, as King of Hungary, appointed an independent Hungarian government based on parliamentary majority. The empire's foreign, military and fiscal affairs came under the authority of joint ministries. Within the dualistic monarchy, the pace of Hungary's bourgeois transformation was quickened.

Hungary. The fact that in the seventies, despite the rapid industrial expansion only 2.5 per cent of the population was employed in industry indicates that the country's basically agrarian character remained unchanged.

Naturally, only in the long run did the industrial growth make itself felt in terms of the workers' movement. Nevertheless, the socialist movement, at least in the capital, had a relatively energetic start immediately after the Compromise, the direct reasons for which lie within the change in the political sphere. Whereas before 1867 the authorities banned every kind of organized workers' movement, the labour policies of the "constitutional" Andrássy[2] government, aiming for the construction of a more or less bourgeois-type administration, had different fundamental principles.

The post-1867 Hungarian state authorized the legal organization of socialist movements, within strict limits. The Compromise, based on the existing balance of political power, made it possible for an opposition, pro-independence party to function in Parliament. By way of the thoroughly anti-democratic electoral law and fraudulent election procedures (open ballots, corruption) the government had a large parliamentary majority. Due to the backwardness of class relationships, the workers' movement did not pose, nor could it have at that stage, any danger to the establishment.

The labour policy of the Hungarian governments hardly changed at all in their basic principles from the time of the Compromise to the 1890's. Possibilities for legal socialist agitation and organizing did exist, especially in the capital. Although fearing the workers' further radicalization, the participants at the 1872 German-Austrian-Hungarian police conference, held in Berlin, did not believe that the workers could be deprived of the right to unionize, to assemble and to strike, and they merely restated the principle for strict police surveillance. However, this stand did not quite agree with the recent Industrial Act announcing the cancellation of the guild system and the prohibition of preparing or organizing strikes but which omitted mention of punitive sanctions.

On May 2, 1875, a decree of the Ministry of the Interior was appended to the Industrial Act prohibiting the formation of craft societies concerned with work conditions and only educational and relief groups were recognized. Consequently, the by-laws of the associations fighting for the improvement of work conditions only pertained to self-education and assistance. Agitation for higher wages was prohibited and such activities could only be conducted illegally (as it was done later on systematically).

Some progress affecting political organizing became evident during the seventies. Whereas in 1873 the police prevented the founding of the labour party, in 1880 the General Workers' Party of Hungary was formed, although not under the intended *social democrat* label. On the other hand, the 1884 Industrial Act

[2] Count Gyula Andrássy was Hungary's Prime Minister between 1867 and 1871. In succession to various short-lived governments, the leader of the newly formed Liberal Party, Kálmán Tisza, became Premier in 1875 and he held this post until spring 1890.

did not indicate any progress over the 1872 Act as to craft organizing; all in all, only a few social-political decrees were enacted.

As for the political chances of the movement, during the post-Compromise years and decades the efforts of the Hungarian ruling classes were primarily spent on counteracting the spirit of internationalism and preventing the socialist organization of the poor-peasant masses. Considerable attention was turned towards the thwarting of any cooperation or unity between the workers' movement and the bourgeois opposition forces which had a significant petite-bourgeois peasant mass base. Despite the unfavourable circumstances, the national economic and political changes of 1867 brought about a number of conditions making possible the foundation of the socialist workers' movement. However, without the aid and cooperation of the international labour movement a socialist movement could never have come about in Hungary. The 1860's are the years of the First International's beginnings and development. The ideas of scientific socialism were present in the International but various petit-bourgeois socialist trends were still strong.

For the developing Hungarian trade-union movement it was crucial, which outside influences and ideas would become influential within Hungary, considering the unlikeliness of an independent, indigenous concept coming about in the midst of the backward conditions.

Three main types of organizing developed during the 1850's and 60's – the English, French and German – in the European workers' movement. In a class by itself was the trade union movement in tsarist Russia, which began later at the turn of the century.

The modern trade-union movement started in England where modern capitalist industrialization first developed. Large trade unions were organized during the first half of the 19th century. The British union movement was under the influence of Chartism and had ideological and economic ambitions. After the decline of Chartism in the fifties the English unions turned exclusively economist and trade unionist, and it was only at the beginning of the 20th century that they once again took up political struggles although strictly reformist and non-Chartist. By and large the trade-union movement of the United States also developed in the direction of the British type of trade unionism.

The development of the French movement, after the revolution of 1848, was determined in part by Blanquism and in part – mainly in the sixties – by Proudhonism. Neither Blanquism, seeking government assistance for "national workshops", nor Proudhonism, urging the establishment of worker cooperatives, promoted the development of the union movement. Both tendencies viewed cooperatives, rather than craft unions fighting for improved conditions, as the solution. The syndicates, aiming for better wages, were formed in the French movement only in the sixties. These, however, failed to find ways to cooperate with the growing political movement of the seventies and eighties and stayed with the syndicalist position of one-sided economic, union struggle. Mainly inspired by Proudhon, anarchism, which was a strong current in the French movement, had

a great influence on the development of this position which also rejected all kinds of political organizing. Although the Marxist labour party, which developed in the eighties, emphasized the primacy of politics and opposed the view that gave first place to trade unions, it could not win over syndicalism which at the turn of the century adapted the anarchist view of the state and gave the French movement an anarcho-syndicalist orientation.

The lack of national unity in Italy and the related vigorous growth of revolutionary democracy influenced the attitude of the industrial proletariat as well. The views of Mazzini and Garibaldi had a sizeable effect on the working class. Independent workers' organizations, so called "leages of resistance", were set up in the fifties to deal with work conditions but they were banned by the government in 1859. At the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies Bakunin's anarchism gained dominance in the Italian movement. The socialist unions were only started in the eighties, they had set up national headquarters by 1893, and regularly cooperated with the Italian social-democratic party.

There was no movement of note in tsarist Russia before the freeing of the serfs in 1861. At the close of the sixties–seventies some small legal socialist groups were formed which represented the political and economic interests of the working class against despotism. By the turn of the century Lenin had already emphasized the need to establish revolutionary organizations and, with the impetus given by the 1905 Revolution, a few did get started. In Russia, unlike in Western Europe, a workers' party came into existence first and stimulated the formation of trade unions. This was due to the fact that the autocracy did not make legal, mass organizing feasible and the workers' party itself could only work in strict illegality. As a matter of fact, in the tsarist empire, the trade unions only came about simultaneously with the full maturation of the proletariat, that is, in the era of imperialism.

As for the Balkans, it was only after the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–1878 had broken the hold of feudalistic Turkish absolutism that the labour movement took its first steps. In Romania, where socialist ideas gained ground before the beginnings of the union movement, it was in the seventies and eighties and in Bulgaria and Greece it was in the nineties and early 20th century that the first craft societies were begun under the ideological influence of German and Austrian social democracy.

The first worker associations, in the guise of relief and educational societies, were formed in the Monarchy's southern Slav areas during the seventies; in Serbia, succeeding the earlier activities of some labour groups, the social-democratic party, founded in 1903, established trade unions.

Three main trends gained acceptance in the German labour movement during the 1860's: the Schulze-Delitzsch type of self help, Lassalleism and the "Eisenach" line of A. Bebel and W. Liebknecht, which was akin to Marxism. Of these only the latter two represented independent labour policy because the self-help groups were completely "free of politics" and functioned under bourgeois control.

It is known that Lassalle adopted the Marxist concept of class struggle and initiated an independent labour movement for civil rights by which he sought to change the character of state power whereby it would eventually be guided by socialist ideas. He wanted to achieve the abolition of capitalist private property and its replacement by socialist property relations through the institutionalization of state-supported cooperatives. Originally, the Lassalleans did not attach any significance to the everyday economic struggles of the workers and, consequently, to the union movement; they believed that for the working class actual economic improvement was impossible under capitalism. However, the struggles of the workers and the experiences of everyday life had a modifying effect on the original Lassallean concept. By the end of the sixties, even the Lassalleans were concerned with the questions of economic struggle and, although without sufficient emphasis, took up the battle for the improvement of work conditions. According to this new analysis, worked out by Lasalle's heir, Schweitzer, the trade unions were exclusively economy oriented, subservient and complementary organs to the political workers' association.

By the end of the sixties, the Lassaleans were opposed by August Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht and their followers. Under their leadership the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany, founded at the 1869 Eisenach Congress, adopted for its purpose the nationalization of the means of production, the achievement of democratic civil rights for the workers and the improvement of work conditions even under capitalism. The party program demanded the repeal of laws which restricted the freedom of the Press, the right to assembly and to organize and it sought regulations concerning female labour and the prohibition of child labour. The Eisenachists, since they believed that some improvement in the workers' conditions under capitalism is possible, supported the establishment of craft societies although there is no direct mention of trade unions in the program. Although the Lassallean influence is evident in the Eisenach program's references to political and economic struggle (free people's state, full return for labour, cooperatives), in their evaluation of the trade-union movement the Bebel and Liebknecht led German social democrats were close to Marxism.

Beginning with the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels, the founders of scientific socialism, emphasized the organic unity of political and economic struggle. As Marx wrote in 1866 in one of the documents of the First International, the trade unions had to be prepared to prevent "the incessant encroachments of capital" and struggle for the improvement of work conditions. This cannot be abandoned "so long as the present system of production lasts". Furthermore, in the course of their development "they must now learn to act deliberately as organizing centres of the working class in the broad interest of its *complete emancipation*".[3]

[3] K. Marx and F. Engels: *Selected Works (in three volumes)*. Volume 2, pp. 83–84. Moscow, 1969, Progress Publishers.

The Marxist concept of trade unions was worked out in its final form during the sixties–seventies. The essence of this concept is that the aim of trade-union policy under capitalism must be the preparation for the struggle against capitalist exploitation and the political liberation of the working class. Although during these years it was in the German movement that the activities of Marx and Engels had the most direct effect, full acceptance of their ideas was prevented by the still strong presence of Lassallean notions. The rapid industrial expansion of the seventies and eighties kept the problem of economic struggles in the foreground. In defiance of official persecution, a strong union movement, with strong ties to the social-democratic party, developed in Germany during the last two decades of the 19th century. In view of the fact that the Empire had a relatively broad franchise in force and the social democrats were numerically strong in Parliament, in the course of electoral struggles district party committees were formed and they carried out regular activities. Thus the party and the unions were separated from the outset as regards their organization, although the political basis for the activities of the more significant unions was the line of the social-democratic party.

In Austria, which had close ties to Germany, during the first year of the "Constitutional Order" in 1867, almost at the same time as the Compromise between Austria and Hungary, the first independent Austrian labour organization was founded, called the Viennese Worker Education Society. This functioned along Lassallean lines and it sought to spread these ideas among the multinational proletariat of the Empire. The followers of the International became active during the succeeding years and attempted to organize a social-democratic party. The Viennese Lassalleans, in view of the Schweitzer tactic regarding the union movement, did not shrink from forming and assisting craft societies; the internationalists aided the union struggle directly. In Vienna alone, there were some seventeen-twenty important craft societies active in 1869.

The Hungarian trade-union movement developed under German and Austrian influence. Research to date has not found any trace of Chartism, Owenism or syndicalism. There are historical reasons for the one-sided German influence. As a result of the limitations put on Hungary's industrial growth, at the beginnings of capitalist industrialization no corresponding working class could develop. Therefore, it became necessary to encourage the immigration of foreign, primarily German, Austrian and Czech-Moravian labour, to certain Hungarian towns, especially to the capital, the population of which was predominantly German in the fifties. Most Hungarian workers, forced to emigrate to other European countries during the absolutist era, had returned as well. In 1857, in the three municipalities of the capital, out of 26,000 tradesmen approximately 5,300 or 20.4 per cent were foreigners, mainly Austrian, Czech and Moravian born and by 1870 this grew to 10,000, or 22.6 per cent. The number of immigrant workers in the metal industry grew from 18 per cent to 22.6 per cent, in the machine industry from 24.8 per cent to 40.6 per cent. There were considerably fewer foreigners in the other branches of industry, nevertheless in 1875, 24 per cent of Budapest's factory workers were foreign, mainly German.

Regular contact with German language areas was facilitated by a system of migration, which could include stays abroad for various lengths of time, peculiar to journeymen. Young workers and journeymen seeking to master their craft, to see the world and to make a better living frequently travelled the more industrialized parts of Germany and Austria and by and large they had no particular difficulties with the language. Having a working class with a knowledge of German was not only useful for travel but also for getting acquainted with German socialist literature.

The extensive influence of German labour trends is understandable with the given Hungarian political conditions. From the Hungarian point of view, Austria, with her unrestricted trade and travel to and from Hungary, was still considered to be "the same country" which on a higher level was under German domination. Beginning in the seventies, close economic and political ties linked the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy to the German Empire. In the Germanic territories of Austria, foremost in Vienna and in the large industrial centres, German social democracy had great influence.

Following the Compromise, a Lassallean influence came to the fore of the Hungarian movement. It was characteristic of the movement that this influence affected just that organization in the founding of which the London General Council of the International had a leading role. In September 1866, the General Council, as part of its work towards the establishment of an international movement, entrusted János Hrabje, a Hungarian carpenter residing in London and a General Council member, to return to Hungary and begin the organization of the working class along the principles of the International. The Hungarian labour movement was quite backward and in 1867–1868 Hrabje only found one organization in the capital, the industrial centre of the country, which surpassed the activities of a relief society. This organization was the Pest-Buda Printers' Self-Education Society, founded in 1865 with the purpose of educating its members and protecting their economic interests. Within this society, as an offshoot of past struggles in the Viennese movement, there was a clash between the self-help advocates and the Lassalleans in the year of the Compromise. Both camps, taking advantage of the new era's possibilities, sought followers from outside the society as well. In February 1868 the Lassalleans founded the General Workers' Society, and the self-help group, with the assistance of bourgeois patrons, formed the Buda-Pest Workers' Society.

The Buda-Pest Workers' Society was only active for a few months. In contrast to this, the General Workers' Society developed considerably during the next couple of years and became the first socialist organization of the Hungarian proletariat, functioning as its political and economic agent.

At its inception, the General Workers' Society was Lassallean in character. Events in connection with its formation illustrate how Lassallean and Marxist views appeared together, as they did in Germany. Although the Society was the result of the initiative of János Hrabje, its leadership got into the hands of Lassalleans. At the rallies held in Pozsony (now Bratislava), in March 1869 and in

Pest in August 1869, which detailed the objectives, the emphasis was placed on the demand for freedom of political expression. The demands that were approved at these reallies meant the adoption of the labour program voted for in Vienna on August 30, 1868.

It is surprising that although, according to the March 27, 1869 edition of the *Arany trombita* (Golden trumpet), a labour paper, a call was made to struggle "for the improvement of the economic lot of the working class", the resolutions accepted at the rallies did not contain any direct demands concerning conditions, hours, or wages. One speaker at the August 22nd rally in Pest demanded, as the August 29 edition of the *Arany trombita* reported, the 10 hour workday – a demand which was not made into a resolution. A possible reason for the omission may have been that the Lassallean founders of the General Workers' Society wanted to change the workers' lot by starting cooperatives.

In view of the fact that at the end of the sixties the Lassalleans (due to J. B. Schweitzer's influence) were no longer reluctant to organize craft societies, the reasons for the depreciation of the question went beyond the influence of "orthodox" Lassalleism. There was a shortage of skilled labour in Hungary at the end of the sixties on account of the rapid industrial growth and, as a result, the skilled workers who guided the organization and founded the craft societies could not be described as destitute by any means. This situation was reflected in the documents of the movement as well. One of the society's leaders, József Kretovics, wrote in an autumn 1869 issue of the *Arany trombita* that "as yet we do not have the same desperate contradiction between Capital and Labour, the condition of the working class is not as alarming and therefore unionizing is not an unavoidable necessity" as it is in the West. "For us unionizing is not the last resort of embittered social relations but rather a preventive measure", according to him. Of course, there is no question of any general well being, at most only of certain effects of the boom. Especially those with several children had serious worries. In the spring of 1870 the employment situation deteriorated, at least in the capital. From an article titled "The State of Industry in Pest", in the April 3, 1870 issue of the *Altalános Munkás Ujság* (General workers' paper), we learn that "whereas before there was a shortage of workers, now there is a large surplus of journeymen in almost every trade." It is important to note that the workers were physically overworked and their average life expectancy hardly extended beyond 30–35 years. The *Munkások Ujsága* (Workers' paper), which was edited by liberal bourgeoisie and could hardly be called radical, wrote of the workers' condition on May 3, 1868, as follows: "In almost every workshop throughout the country work begins at 5 a.m. and goes on until 7, 8, 9, even 10 at night." The 13–16 hour workday was common in factories. The facts show that generally a workday was twelve hours long.

The shortcomings of the early activities of the General Workers' Society in belittling union struggles were quickly capitalized by the Hungarian followers of Schulze-Delitzsch. They wanted the formation of relief units and tried to confront relief-work. the sick fund, that is, the essentially socio-political activities with the,

for them dangerous, political agitation of the General Workers' Society and with the Lassalleism they condemned. At their initiative the Workers' Education Society of Pest-Buda was formed in August 1869, which intended to continue the program of the defunct (as of 1868) Buda-Pest Workers' Society. However, the designs of the bourgeois patrons were frustrated as the activities of the General Workers' Society and the Workers' Education Society soon turned in the direction of Marxism and Internationalism.

The essence of the changes that occurred from early 1870 to spring 1871, due to the influence of the socialists of Pest who kept contact with the International – Károly Farkas, Antal Ihrlinger, Viktor Külföldi, András Essel and others – was that the General Workers' Society functioned increasingly in accord with the political line of the International and the Workers' Education Society, having rid itself of bourgeois influences, openly joined the International in May, 1870. This development was crowned by the ensuing merger of the two groups in May, 1871.

The subsequent vigorous growth of the Societies was significant from the trade-union point of view as the trade-union politics of the First International were fully implemented by both Societies in 1870–1871. In every regard, this influence was beneficial and pointed the way forward. As mentioned, it was at the close of the sixties that the International Working Men's Association adopted the Marxist interpretation of trade unionism. The 1866 Geneva, the 1867 and the 1868 Brussels congresses thoroughly examined the question of trade unionism. The Geneva Congress had already taken a strong stand on the side of the Marxist view of the union movement and against Proudhonism, and this stand was reaffirmed at both subsequent congresses. The growing influence of the International helped to promote the Marxist development of the Hungarian movement.

In 1868–1869, during the first years of the General Workers' Society, there were a few workers' groups already active in Hungary, which might be considered socialist. One prime example was the Pest-Buda Printers' Self-Education Society, which, as already mentioned, played a big part in the founding of the General Workers' Society. In May 1868, the Society appointed a commission for the task of "working out suggestions to relieve the adversity of the journeymen printers' conditions". On the basis of the prepared recommendation, the printers wanted to back their demand by striking. Although the evolving "price control movement" was broken by the resistance of the bosses and through the use of scabs, in February 1870 there was another printers' strike demanding among other things, and in addition to, a wage increase, the nine hour workday. (This was the first instance in Hungary that this demand was made.) In 1872 the capital's printers succeeded in getting a nine hour workday.[4]

[4] It is characteristic that there was very intensive contact between the Hungarian and the Austrian printers. In 1868, 1870 and 1871 joint Austro-Hungarian printers' congresses were held. In 1868 a plan for an Austro-Hungarian printers' union was drawn up but never materialized due to a government ban.

Regarding the first year of the General Workers' Society it must be added that the General Tailors' Society was formed during early 1868. In September of the same year, this Society, according to an 1870 pamphlet, "accepted the principles of social democracy and became a section of the General Workers' Society". In the summer of 1869 the tailors of Pest struck for higher wages and better housing. The Cobblers' Society of Pest was also started in 1868 on the initiative of the members of the General Workers' Society. A 1902 work on the history of the cobblers' movement gave interesting information on the organizing activities of the leaders, who were referred to as Lassalleans, and on the combining of Marxist and Lassallean ideas. "They repeatedly explained and analysed Ferdinand Lassalle's labour program and, finally, the proposed cobblers' union, its purpose and its benefits. The Society's foremost aim became the organization of journeymen cobblers and to make their situation better, or at least bearable."[5]

Although its basic charter was not approved, the Society not only continued its activities but also joined "the General Workers' Society, founded on the program of Marx and Lassalle, which made it possible for the Journeymen Cobblers' Society to get decent premises where its rallies, meetings and conferences could be held free of interruptions". The General Workers' Society's paper, the *Testvériség* (Brotherhood) (February 5, 1871) discussing the Society's regular monthly meeting, attests to the fact that the Society functioned consistently.

About the activities of other craft societies which had a later start, we can infer from the charter of the Cobblers' Society, found in the archives of the Ministry of the Interior. According to the charter, the purpose of this affiliate of the General Workers' Society was "the members'" education and the safeguarding and promotion of their reputation and economic interests. The following ways were mentioned to realize these ends: "the founding of producing units to promote the members' material welfare and to sufficiently acquaint them with the laws of economics in relation to production, its requirements and the use and accumulation of goods and, further, a brotherly approach to fellow workers in the country or abroad." All this indicates that in its principal aspects this society was essentially a social-democratic adherent of the International's line. Consequently, neither the Mayor of Pest, nor the Chief of Police, nor the Minister of Commerce advised approval of the charter. A Ministry of Commerce spokesman went right to the point, writing that "the activities of the society in question would be to put pressure on the relations between employer and employee, but in a one-sided manner".

As far as the "one-sided pressure" is concerned, not only the printers stopped work in February 1870 in the capital, but five other factories also went on strike for the ten hour workday. These, initially economist, movements later took on political characteristics. When news had reached the workers that the police

[5] János Horváth – István Farkas: *A budapesti cipészsegédek szakegylete 25 éves története 1877-től 1902-ig* (The 25 year history of the Budapest Journeymen Cobblers' Society, 1877–1902), Budapest, 1902, p. 7.

arrested F. W. Raspe, a German social democrat who came to Pest in November 1869 to work with the General Workers' Society, they marched to the police station and demanded his release. The First Hungarian Machine Factory workers were on strike the longest, and only in April did the movement collapse without achieving its goals. The bosses of the plant used unskilled workers to replace the skilled ones and this succeeded in breaking the strike.

The strikes of early 1870 were not spontaneous but rather the work of the General Workers' and the Workers' Education Societies. Otherwise the reactions of the striking workers to Raspe's arrest could hardly be imagined since his name was only known by those involved with the Societies' activities.

Together with the development of the economic movement, the General Workers' Sick-Relief and Disabled Fund was established, which was significant from the viewpoint of the workers' living conditions. The Ministry of the Interior approved its charter on February 26, 1870. This was an easy matter since mutual aid type of activities were regarded favourably by the government, expecting it to counterbalance political activity. However, the concepts of self-help and a socialist outlook were combined within the Fund. The actual establishment of the workers' insurance fund was the work of Károly Farkas in the Workers' Education Society. It opened on April 3, 1870 with Farkas as Secretary. In 1870 it had 750 members, growing to 1,500 by 1871 and to 3,000 by 1872. (By the end of the eighties it approached thirty thousand.)

The establishment of the Fund indicated that the Workers' Education Society of Pest-Buda was influential in giving a fresh boost to the economic struggle. Many workers who joined the organization, which was formed under the patronage of the bourgeoisie, were not satisfied with the exclusively political role of the General Workers' Society which was at the time in its first months. In addition to Károly Farkas, the metallurgist and Hungarian representative of the International, a leading role was taken by Antal Stróbel, a mechanic who organized the 1869 June strike at the Wagon-works of Pest to protest against unwarranted wage deductions.

The Fund created friction between the General Workers' Society and the Workers' Education Society. Within the General Workers' Society the still numerous "orthodox" Lassalleans, scorning self-help, failed to grasp the significance of socio-political institutions and, following Lassalle's teachings, dismissed them as being unnecessary. The members of the International's Pest section opposed the Lassalleans' views and tried to unite the two societies. Negotiations on the question of unification broke down in April 1870 precisely on account of the contradictions connected with the Fund, and actual unification only came a year later.

The General Workers' Society was already working on the establishment of new societies during 1870, in the midst of the unification talks. They wanted to establish craft organizations which would equally concern themselves with the workers' education, organization and political and economic struggles.

In other words, at the end of 1869 and beginning of 1870, both workers'

societies organized craft societies according to the political line of the First International. The October 1870 council meeting of the General Workers' Society declared that "it is in the interest of the entire Hungarian working class that those societies which work with us on the basis of our program and which have adopted our program or will be joining us submit to us, by December 15th of this year, a detailed report and statistics on their membership". On November 3rd, the General Workers' Society issued an appeal to the craft societies stating that it could no longer bear the costs of political work and that it had to receive material assistance from the craft societies. The October 1870 Council meeting decided on a monthly three *krajcárs* per member as adequate for its requirements. The members of the craft societies automatically became full members of the General Workers' Society upon payment.

This shows that at the time of the General Workers' Society, the Hungarian socialist labour movement had already exhibited those particular characteristics which indicated an organic unity between political and economic functions.

Regrettably, we were unable to ascertain what other workers' societies were active in the capital besides the already mentioned printers' society at the time the appeal was issued. A functionary of that time reported that craft societies followed one another in affiliating with the central headquarters and paid the determined quotas into the central fund. Basically, the autumn 1871 Ministry of the Interior report on the Hungarian activities of the First International stated much the same thing: "... the following craft societies declared themselves to be Internationalists: in Pest, the tailors, the cobblers, the hat-makers, the button-makers, the string-makers, the weavers, the upholsterers, the brewers, the coppersmiths, the metal printers, and in Buda, the tailors and hat-makers." The report gives the figure 9,866 (which was probably an exaggeration) as the total number of members of the organizations which had joined the General Workers' Society. As mentioned earlier, in addition to the above list, the Printers' Self-Education Society had close ties to the General Workers' Society, although it never affiliated formally. These societies, none of which had approved charters, must have been established in 1870 and in the first half of 1871, but we have no further data on their subsequent activities.

The hat-makers' society was founded in March 1871. The General Workers' Society's newspaper, the *Testvériség*, carried a call in its March 12, 1871 issue under the heading of "To the hat-makers!" From an article in its March 26 number, headlined "Workers' meeting", we learn that at their March 19 meeting, the hat-makers of Buda announced their acceptance of the submitted by-laws and joined the General Workers' Society. Their colleagues in Pest had made this same decision earlier; the hat-makers' society of Pest was established on March 15, 1871 and constituted a section of the General Workers' Society.

The upholsterers held their first meeting on February 23, 1871 in a restaurant in Pest. The agenda called for those present "to establish a craft society". Several General Workers' Society members took part in the meeting and at their urging it was decided to constitute the society as a General Workers' Society affiliate. We

know that in this case as well the authorities did not approve the necessary permits for the society's functions. The by-laws were submitted to the Ministry of the Interior in 1872 where they met with rejection, it being reasoned that "There is no point in forming a self-educational or self-help society of journeymen under the pretext of being a craft society."

This Ministry of the Interior report also mentioned the coppersmiths and the metal printers. Unfortunately, we do not have their by-laws. However, the signs of restlessness, which occurred at the more important ironworks in the capital during 1869–1870, indicated that the organization of the ironworkers was already under way under the leadership of Farkas, Stróbel and others.

The May 1870 issue of the General Workers' Society's paper carried the news that the blacksmith and cartwright journeymen's association began operating on May 1st; on June 26th, they were already debating the by-laws and electing the officers at their general meeting, to which the master workmen were also invited. Of the others mentioned in the Ministry's report – the button-makers, weavers and brewers, who probably got organized in 1870 – we know only that, like the tailors, they had a social-democratic outlook and were planning to affiliate with the General Workers' Society.

We are aware of the bookbinders' society, which was close to the General Workers' Society. The *Általános Munkás Ujság* reported in its June 5, 1870 edition that at its May 9 meeting the journeymen bookbinders' society called on the guild leaders to give out a financial statement of the society's assets. We also know that besides the General Workers' Society several other relief groups were active in the capital. However, they cannot be considered socialist.

It also must be mentioned that the leaders of the General Workers' Society organized "overall" societies where there was no possibility of getting a separate craft society together; in some instances, these societies were made up of professional sections. We know that by March 1871 the Újpest workers' society was functioning and, within it, a cobblers' section. Our information of the separate Óbuda workers' society dates back to April 1871.

The establishment of branches was part of the General Workers' Society's effort to organize on a national scale. The intention to expand and become a national organization was indicated by the title of its founding manifesto of February 1868: "To the workers of Hungary and all territories under her Crown!" However, organizational work in the rural areas was subordinate to the tasks in the capital. The exaggerated importance of the capital city was already sharply evident during the initial period of modern industrialization. A full third of Hungary's industrial production and workers were concentrated in the capital already in the seventies. The situation was also different as far as organizing was concerned, because the Budapest authorities tended to be more liberal toward the labour movement than their rural counterparts. This was so partly because they had to reckon with the mood and opinion of the mass of workers concentrated in the industrial centres and partly because anything that occurred in the capital was less easy to conceal from the eyes of the nation and the world.

The rural movement was backward relative to the situation in the capital. We do not have any information concerning the societies of the various rural townships; no statement on the societies, similar to the February 1867 one, was issued. However, from that earlier statement and from the extraordinarily meagre rural documents we can conclude that there was barely a trace of socialist organizing outside of the capital and its immediate, outlying districts. The sole exceptions were the large towns of Pozsony (Bratislava) and Temesvár (Timişoara), which at that time belonged to Hungary, and Sopron, Pécs, Nagykanizsa and one or two other industrial centres.

It is worthwhile to mention that the General Workers' Society also wanted to organize the agrarian proletariat and even the propertyless intellectuals on a craft society basis. These plans, however, could not be realized during the time of the first Hungarian socialist organization, and only considerably later, after the turn of the century, did the socialist movement return to this problem.

The increasingly intense organizing of craft societies made coordination a necessity. Consequently, during early 1871, with the cooperation of August Rüdt and Leopold Schaeftner, respectively German and Austrian social democrats who arrived in Budapest in February 1871, the craft society section of the General Workers' Society was organized after the Viennese model. The section was headed by a twelve member committee, among which were representatives of the sick-fund as well. As Károly Farkas said in his statement to the police, "the trade-union section is the communications centre for workers in different trades and it is in charge of giving the movement a uniform direction". The importance of this section, which was actually the predecessor of the eventual Trade Union Council, was heightened by the fact that it was an arm of both the General Workers' Society and the Workers' Education Society, and under the leadership of Károly Farkas it worked for the organization and unification of craft societies.

The spring of 1871 saw the expansion of the General Workers' Society's activities to a national level and also the intensification of the movement for better wages among the capital's workers. The latter development began with a wave of strikes for improved work conditions during March–April 1871, according to the daily press of the time. The brewers of Kőbánya (one of the capital's industrial districts) and the tailors and upholsterers of Pest demanded a ten hour workday. The bakers joined the tailors' strike. There occurred a short-lived strike in the National Railways' workshops. The saddlery and leathergoods workers began a movement for much the same demands as the tailors, and in June three hundred locksmiths of the wagon works went on strike. The striking workers also demanded, besides the reduced workday, an average 25 per cent wage increase. The 1871 strike movement affected some 5–6,000 workers in Pest, that is, a sixth of the industrial workers.

As for the causes, economics were clearly the deciding factor. Not only did real earnings decline in 1871 but the prices of vital consumer goods rose as well. The seriousness of this was also noted by the bourgeois press: "As a result of the

general inflation even the most industrious of workers find it next to impossible to provide adequately for a family of three", wrote *A Hon* (The homeland), a liberal paper, on May 14, 1871. The strikes of 1871 were not spontaneous. For example, the tailors section of the General Worker's Society backed the tailors' movement. The fact that the upholsterers issued the same demands as the tailors points to the collaboration of the General Workers' Society. The bakers' demands, voiced in the form of a petition, also indicates organized activity. That the workers on strike at the wagon works issued appeals to the workers of other factories, urging them to strike, attests to Károly Farkas's consistent agitational work among the iron workers.

In the spring of 1871 the General Workers' Society already expressly approved, in principle, the use of strikes as a weapon of the workers in their struggle. Whereas in 1870 there were articles in the *Általános Munkás Ujság* characterizing strikes as being a "dangerous and ineffective weapon", by 1871, the *Testvériség* had already clearly supported strikes, in accord with the line of the International. It needs to be added that in the spring of 1871, in addition to starting the craft society section and organizing strikes, the General Workers' Society had raised the demand for the elimination of the guild system; a workers' demand that had been timely since 1848.

It was also during these months that the General Workers' Society had reached its highest political level. By merging with the Workers' Education Society there was an organized and united Hungarian socialist movement, an assurance of further progress. However, events developed differently when, following the May–June 1871 political demonstrations, in the organization of which the "craft society section" had a hand, the leaders of the General Workers' Society were arrested and the function of the organization, although it was not formally disbanded, was rendered impossible.

Even though the General Workers' Society was forced to cease operations during the summer of 1871, the craft societies in contact with it tried to continue. We have information of the activities of the tailors', the cobblers' and the printers' societies. Furthermore, in 1872 an attempt was made to establish the Budapest jewellers' society and in 1873, similarly, the ironworkers', tinsmiths', carpenters' and bakers' societies.

Concurrently with the regular publication of the labour press, Ihrlinger and Farkas attempted to organize a party. Indeed, they announced the formation of the Hungarian Labour Party in the spring of 1873, but the authorities disbanded the embryonic party. The individual tasks of the socialist craft societies became the topic in connection with the formation of a party. "The workers' societies are the best way for the workers to defend themselves against persecution and repression", wrote the *Munkás Heti-Krónika* (Workers' weekly chronicle) on January 26, 1873. The repeated rejection of approval of the by-laws failed to deter the organizers; the organizations functioned without the endorsed by-laws. The *Munkás Heti-Krónika*, in its April 20, 1873 number carried a survey under the heading of "Workers' societies in Hungary" which gave evidence of the craft

society movement's development. It seems that in the Pest districts of the capital, the following craft societies were operating: the journeymen cobblers' society, the journeymen tailors' relief and self-education society, the gold, silver, jewellery and related crafts journeymen's society, the journeymen upholsterers' society and the Central-Hungarian printers' and type-founders' society. We also know about the activities of the ironworkers', tinsmiths', furriers', and bakers' societies which were still in the formative stages. The following workers' societies existed in Buda: the Printers' Education Society, the Óbuda General Workers' Society and the Shipconstruction Workers' Consumer Society. In addition to these, the General Workers' Sick-Relief and Disabled Fund kept functioning.

The survey mentioned the following societies in the rural areas: General Workers' Society, Printers' Self-Education Society, Sick-Fund (Pozsony), General Workers' Society (Szombathely), Artisans', journeymen tailors', metal workers' craft societies, Sick-Fund (Pécs), leather workers' craft society (Szigetvár) and General Workers' Society (Eszék). As is evident from Antal Ihrlinger's statement to the police in 1873, great attention was paid to the conduct of the societies in the countryside by the about to be formed workers' party. It sent the labour papers to various areas and asked the societies to distribute them. The convening of a national social-democratic congress was also planned and the societies in the countryside were to be included.

The documents of the embryonic party defined the societies' tasks in a social-democratic way: develop class-consciousness, disseminate information on cases of social injustice, struggle for the improvement of living conditions. At the same time it had its contradictions and unsolved problems; occasionally there were efforts aimed at drawing independent craftsmen into these societies.

However, no lasting successes could be achieved in spite of considerable efforts. By this time, the societies did not function regularly, in most cases their membership was as low as 20–30 members and they influenced only a fraction of the capital's industrial workers. Nevertheless, in 1876 the journeymen blacksmiths were organizing and by 1877 the organizing of the ironworkers had reached the stage when at a public meeting they announced the formation of a society. It was during this same year that the bricklayers' society was established. However, the new societies also failed to reach the masses, although the iron and construction industries were the largest in the capital.

The causes of the stagnation were traced to three genuinely important factors in a December 27, 1874 article in the *Munkás Heti-Krónika*, but without mentioning adverse economic conditions: (1) The disappointment that had set in following the initial burst of activity and lack of immediate results, (2) fear of employers' reprisals, (3) the measures taken by the government and related authorities: refusal to approve by-laws or delay in doing so, police restrictions.

The organizational stagnation did not mean, however, that the labour press no longer concerned itself with the craft societies or that it was any the less concerned. On the contrary, several theoretical articles appeared in the seventies which gave concrete outlines of the craft societies' tasks, outlines which were valid

for years. The small group of social-democratic workers, who essentially had already functioned as a party despite the 1873 March ban on party organizing, formed the core of the movement. According to the previously mentioned statement on the societies, "the central General Workers' Society" kept premises in the capital and published the labour paper which consistently urged the workers to organize craft societies. "Each and every worker should work, according to the best of his/her ability, toward the establishment of craft societies where workers can be together and realize that those who work really do not have anything, while those who do nothing live without fear and have everything and that the worker is today's slave without the right to use what he creates with his own hands", stated the *Munkás Heti-Krónika* on March 9, 1873. The paper emphasized the internationalism of the workers' struggle since capitalist exploitation itself is international. In its March 1, 1874 number, it said that the workers' societies' "purpose is that of a preparatory school for the workers' future and all workers, concerned with the future and their fellow workers, must belong to it". And on December 27, 1874: "The general goals of the workers' societies are to jolt the workers out of their stagnation, to awaken their human feelings and class-consciousness, to protect the material interests of the members and to create better conditions, worthy of human beings, through the power of unity." Work hours and wages were concretely and frequently mentioned as well.

The data at our disposal indicate that the Hungarian socialist movement of the seventies gave an essentially Marxist interpretation of the functions of trade unions, although, corresponding to the initial period, in a somewhat primitive way.

The second half of the seventies saw the Hungarian socialist workers' movement face once again the questions of founding a legal workers' party. However, the forces were divided and the ranks of socialist workers split into two camps. Leó Frankel, a former Minister of the Paris Commune, was supported by those socialists who were convinced internationalists and close to Marxism. The leader of the other group was Viktor Külföldi, a journalist and one of the first militants of Hungarian socialism. He and his followers recognized the significance of political and economic struggle and gave it greater emphasis than Frankel. At the same time they did not share Frankel's consistent internationalism. Personal factors were involved as well in the split. Consequently, two parties, the Non-Voters' Party, that is, the party of the disenfranchized under Leó Frankel's leadership, and the Hungarian Workers' Party, with Viktor Külföldi as its leader, were founded in 1878, in April and June respectively.

The capital's craft society movements became active after the two foundation congresses. A few new societies were formed in 1879 such as the mill-workers' craft society and journeymen bookbinders' self-education society as well as the cartwrights' and journeymen blacksmiths' sick-relief and self-education society. The carpenters were also working on getting a society together. Although the government-approved by-laws did not allow for it, the societies regularly dealt with the work conditions, relief and education of workers. The "Hungarian

Worker Calendar" for 1880, put out by the editors of the socialist papers, gives us a picture of the situation of the societies at the close of the seventies. Under the heading "Existing workers' societies" we read that the printers, finishers, house painters, cobblers, carpenters, tailors, goldsmiths and bookbinders had sick-relief societies. Those which officially were called self-education societies were listed separately. The tailors, bookbinders, cobblers, carpenters, millers, iron- and metalworkers, button-makers and makers of passementerie had self-education societies in Budapest. The printers' self-education society was not listed (evidently on account of its close connection with the relief society) and neither were some other previously mentioned (the bricklayers', for example). In the latter case, it was obviously because they only reached the stage of having so-called organizing committees but the rest of their activities were not systematic.

We can draw conclusions from the report about the situation of the movement in the countryside. The General Workers' Sick-Relief and Disability Fund had branches in practically all of the larger rural towns. Apart from that, however, there is very little else worth mentioning as regards craft organizing in rural areas. But, we do know from one of Leó Frankel's reports that at the 1878 congress of his party some delegates represented the workers of rural industrial centres.

The continuing growth of the craft society movement was determined by the unification of Hungary's socialist forces in 1880. Viktor Külföldi withdrew from the leadership of the Hungarian Workers' Party which merged with the Non-Voters' Party at their May 1880 Congress. A part of the delegates were from the craft societies. A notice appeared in the *Népszava* (People's word) a week prior to the congress stating that "the craft societies and craft associations are requested to elect their delegates in time to the national workers' congress to be held at Whitsuntide". The founding congress of the General Workers' Party of Hungary (the Hungarian Social Democratic Party name was not allowed by the Chief of Police who was present in a government commissioner function) accepted the first party program of Hungary's socialist workers' movement, which Frankel and his colleagues had drawn up.

The program contained numerous objectives regarding work conditions. It asked for the 10 hour – "for the time being" – workday, Sundays as holidays, and, furthermore, the banning of night shifts "in all of those branches of industry where it is not an unavoidable necessity". The demand for reduced worktime included those plants as well where the workers had to deal with toxic material. Other objectives were "the banning of child labour, under fourteen years of age, in every industry, and the exclusion of women from jobs which have harmful effects on health and morals. Equal pay for equal work for men and women." The program included mention of the need to abolish fines in the factories and the need for labour-safety regulation and health supervision by a worker-elected functionary. These concrete demands determined the direction of the economic struggle and the work of the craft societies for many years.

It was not just to the trade-union movement of the eighties that the 1880 Party

Congress and its accepted program gave a theoretical content. By the time of the Congress, that trade-union framework, which had determined the development of the Hungarian movement since the General Workers' Society, had already taken shape and was consolidated. The congresses of 1878, as the 1880 unification meeting, reflected the organic contact between the political leadership and the craft societies. Outside of the craft societies there were no local political, that is, party organizations. It was primarily the social-democratic workers of the craft societies who took part in mass meetings, congresses and in fact they constituted the Party. In other words, the growth of the Hungarian trade-union movement differed from both Western and Russian developments. In Hungary there had not been a modern, socialist type of trade-union movement before the political movement got under way; later, the political and the craft organizations developed parallel, almost intertwined, with one another.

The Party leadership endeavoured to establish those organizational forms which would ensure regular liaison between Party and craft organs. Craft "sections" were attached to the Party leadership during the eighties, which were essentially confidential bodies. Later on, the leadership founded the Budapest Workers' Circle, which began its operations in January 1884, to coordinate the craft societies' work.

The by-laws, which listed only self-educational tasks, did not reflect the true objectives of this organization. Therefore, approval was granted by the Ministry of the Interior on December 5, 1883. However, at the same time, it instructed the Chief of Police to maintain strict surveillance: "Since there are grounds for suspicion that members of this society wish to engage in socialist schemes, I call upon you, Sir, to follow the activities of this society with the greatest vigilance and report to me all observations."

These "socialistic schemes" were in part the attempts to activate the craft societies and in part the keeping of the critique of work conditions in the fore. The Circle became the meeting place of the Hungarian socialist movement's inner debates. During the second half of the eighties, the leadership of the General Workers' Party of Hungary, following the example of the Austrian "moderates", abstained from radical statements and made considerable adjustments to suit the circumstances of legality, and with a show of loyalty towards the government, it tried to enhance the possibilities of the social-democratic movement. The radicals, who took a stand against the "moderate", indeed, sometimes opportunist leadership, based themselves on the principle of revolutionary class struggle; according to the anarchists, who represented a third line, the time for the violent overthrow of the existing social order had arrived. The presence of the "moderate", the radical and the anarchist tendencies reflected the influence of the similarly divided movements of the German-speaking population in Austria.

As a result of the debates in the Budapest Workers' Circle, a certain ferment began within the craft society movement as well. Radical "agitators", inciting revolt, appeared in various craft societies (the iron- and metalworkers, the cobblers and others). The growing radicalism also had an effect on the attitudes of

the Party leaders. From the article dealing with the tasks of the craft movement, in the June 27, 1886 issue of the *Népszava*, it is obvious, despite the cautious wording, that the Party leadership too had adopted a more militant stand and regarded socialist agitation and the achievement of better work conditions as the tasks of the craft societies, furthermore, with the backing of the movement, by strikes if necessary, because "the workers can petition from dawn to dusk but all they achieve is to swell the contents of various wastepaper baskets." In short, the effect of the radicals was the intensification of the craft movement.

A debate broke out between the Party's leadership and the leaders of the printers' society during the autumn of 1886 concerning the analysis of the craft societies' tasks and, beyond it, of the political direction of the whole movement. The relationship of the two groups had been strained since the seventies. The Party leadership, in view of the printers' society's relatively favourable material position, wanted the printers, they being the most organized, to give strong material support to the Party. That the printers kept away from the General Workers' Sick-Relief and Disability Fund, having had their own sick-relief society, also led to conflicts. Many members of the printers' association feared for their money and did not want to risk it for general working-class objectives. When in the autumn of 1886 the Party leaders announced the convening of the third congress of the General Workers' Party of Hungary, the printers' trade paper, in its October 1, 1886 issue, reacted antagonistically. They charged that the Party leadership was secretive and that it placed too great an emphasis on the struggle for the right to vote at the expense of the craft movement. It stated that, although there is a need for the vote franchise, "meetings are useless and so are petitions to Parliament if public opinion is unfavourable and if they are not backed by well organized, prosperous craft societies". The attack was answered by the *Népszava* on October 10, and on April 17, 1887 it returned to the subject. It recognized that there were "questions of equal importance" with the general right to vote, but "from the tactical and judicial viewpoints this is the most crucial", it wrote. "And what can the prosperous craft societies do?" it continued. "They can multiply their wealth, acquire real estate and if it comes to having to do something, to sacrifice an appropriate share for some other objective, well, the by-laws won't allow it, we can't do it, we can't meddle in such things, etc. – these are the excuses we get. After all, there is the printers' prosperous craft society, just what does it do for the workers? We know it is very little."

The polemics continued in a similar vein, with a blend of correct and incorrect views. The political and economic struggles were unquestionably of equal import. Ihrlinger and his colleagues did indeed make the suffrage movement the central issue and overrated its significance. The Party leadership was far from taking on revolutionary ideas and revolutionary tactics. Their exaggerated caution toward legality and fear of the authorities' punitive measures continuously impeded their activities and blocked the consistent and forceful application of the correct line. Although the printers' society was right in voicing the craft movement's significance, they did not recognize the importance of political struggle and to

a certain degree they refrained from political activities. This attitude did not serve the interests of the developing movement. It was not an accident that the radical, opposition movements had nothing to do with the printers' society. The radicals opposed both the Party leadership and the printers' organization.

While the Party leadership managed to find a *modus vivendi* with the printers' society, a split occurred in March 1887 in the Budapest Workers' Circle as a result of the contradictions between the Party leaders and the radical elements.

A police report, dated March 3rd, stated that a few comrades of Pál Engelmann, an ironworker, quit the Circle because of "incompatibility"; and a year later, on February 24, 1888, a report stated that it was not a case of quitting but of getting expelled. For Ihrlinger and his associates, their confident stand in face of the opposition served the purpose of attracting the government's attention to the "moderate" nature of the Party leadership.

The movement moved forward at a slow pace indeed. There was hardly any news of new societies being formed, and strikes of any magnitude were rare, although most had social-democratic participation (the June 1880 carpenters' strike and the May 1882 Pécs miners' strike). However, there was a certain development and the third congress of the General Workers' Party of Hungary was evidence of it. The preparations for the Party Congress, to be held from the 1st to the 11th of April, 1887, were unique. Among the delegates, besides the representatives of the societies and those elected at public meetings, were the shop stewards of the capital's factories, businesses and workshops as well.[6] According to the accounts of the represented plants there were delegates from many of the capital's factories at the Congress.

These developments were due to many factors. The economic slump following the 1873 crisis was over by the second half of the eighties and a new industrial upward trend had set in. A certain change characterized government politics as well. The government was reconciled to the fact that in Hungary and, primarily, in the capital a social-democratic movement was operating with "moderate elements" at its helm, although it endeavoured to limit its activities to a narrow circle. However, the most immediate and decisive factor in the revival was the activity of the radical elements opposed to the moderates. From the beginning of 1888 there were attempts to coordinate the dissenting radical movement. A police detective wrote in a May 22, 1888 report that the Budapest journeymen cobblers' self-education and job-register society was one of the strongholds of the oppositionist movement. According to a later, June 13 report, Pál Engelmann and his comrades had occasional meetings "to discuss socialistic matters".

During these years the radical socialist movement made headway in the plants and in the important heavy-industrial plants in particular. In light of this, the July 29, 1888 police report becomes interesting, according to which, at the

[6] "Shop stewards" had an extraordinarily important role in the German, Austrian and Hungarian socialist movements. The organized workers of the various crafts elected them to be their representatives at Party and trade-union forums.

initiative of agitators who had been expelled from the country, "several foreigners, factory workers in Budapest, meet during the evening, lately in the restaurants of certain outlying districts of the capital and sharply criticize the work conditions of the plants, expressing their dissatisfaction in an inflammatory manner... Several workers of the Ganz Wagon-Works meet on Sundays and holidays in the garden of Práter street number 74 in the 8th district under the pretext of bowling... Most of these workers are under the sway of socialist ideas and there are several known socialists among them." According to a September report several workers of the main workshop of the National Railways and the Láng Machine Factory "profess radical socialist ideas and reputedly propagate them among their fellow workers".

Socialist agitation had an obvious role in the strikes, which occurred during early 1889 in three well-known plants of the capital, the Machlup and the Schmidt machine factories and the Bernfeld war material factory. The workers struck for wage increases, or rather, the restoration of the wages to the pre-wage cut level. At the Bernfeld plant, with 15–16 workhours daily they earned 8–9 *forints* weekly, at the Machlup and Schmidt plants they received 4–5 forints for 10 workhours. "And the worker had to live with a salary like this, a daily 60–80 *krajcárs* in a large city where his every step costs money", wrote the *Népszava* on January 13, 1889. "But this is not all, this gets even more fanciful, which makes it even more obvious that secret agreements exist between certain industrialists to make it impossible for a worker dismissed from one plant to find work at another and this is indicated by a signature in the workbook marked in a pre-arranged way. Thus, for example, if a director of the Machlup plant makes a small crossing on the last two letters of his name, it indicates that the worker in question should not be given employment and he can go to any munitions plant, once the signature is seen he can return to where he came from, there is no work for him."

From the workers' point of view, all three strikes were unsuccessful, which started a debate in the craft societies. The printer-opposition, renewing the old debate, blamed the Party leadership for the defeat. The *Typographia* (Typography), the printers' society's paper, suggested the strengthening of the craft organizations, noting that this "is more rewarding than tilting at political windmills".

However, the *Népszava,* in its January 27, 1889 issue, emphasized that the "well-organized craft societies could certainly be a great help in the workers' interests", but they would have great difficulties getting results as well because of the capitalist oppression. The article continues by detailing the tasks and the situation of the craft societies: "The craft societies have their own function. They constitute a school for the masses of workers who, regardless of being in different crafts, fight united for the workers' common cause. The Party has known this for a long time; in assigning this role to the craft societies it has tried throughout the years to give effective assistance in forming craft societies and to expand their field of operation; but the results were not as expected. They shut themselves away from the world, from workers in other crafts and they would rather quietly

fuss with sick-relief than give any support to the real purpose of the craft society. What caused this? A lack of thinking? Indifference? Or is it an expression of general well-being? We do not believe the latter could have caused any satisfaction and it is rather the lack of thinking and the deep-rooted apathy, which is a recently acquired characteristic of our people, which are responsible for the Hungarian workers' craft societies failing to develop in the way they should have in the interest of the workers' cause." The article goes on to emphasize that it is not the quantitative growth of craft societies but rather the improvement of their capacity to act that moves the workers' cause forward.

It is obvious that the argument concerned the significance and the relationship of the trade union and the political struggles. The *Typographia* was right in pointing out that without a strong craft movement a successful movement for higher wages was impossible. However, its position revealed economist tendencies as it demagogically belittled political activity and it did not even mention the need to struggle for a socialist social order. The leaders of the printers' society, taking the slogan of "subsistence", neglected the socialist movement's fundamental objectives.

The *Népszava* article, expressing the stand of the Party leadership, formulated the correct view that party, that is, political organizing was a higher level of the organization of a class and the craft organs were its "preparatory schools". However, the article did not discuss the economic tasks of the craft societies and the related responsibilities of the Party leadership. It is debatable whether they were right in dismissing the sick-relief aspect of the craft society work. There were certain advantages to the concentration of relief (a unified system, a central body with financial resources at its disposal, etc.) and the attractiveness of the craft societies would only have been enhanced by relief and social-political activities. It was also incorrect and unworthy on the part of the Party leadership to pass blame on to the leaders of the craft societies, since the education and direction of these leaders actually would have been the task of the Party leadership. The foremost representative of the viewpoint that all strong actions must be avoided and that it is necessary to conform to official directives to protect their legal status was the Party leadership itself.

During 1889, the Party leadership had to combat growing oppositionist attacks precisely because of its compromising, shaky political line. However, the oppositionist groups themselves were not such that they could point the correct path for the Hungarian socialist movement to follow. Those around *Az asztalos* (The carpenter) weekly paper, edited by Viktor Külföldi, which began publishing on June 1, 1889, were under the influence of bourgeois-nationalist views and thus, naturally, could not aid the progress of the workers' craft society movement. The nature of this direction was clearly revealed by Viktor Külföldi's article in the June 9 issue of *Az asztalos* titled "The Relationship of the Workers' Societies to the Employers" and, further, by a piece in the June 30 issue, which was probably also authored by Külföldi. Whereas the first article took a clear stand in favour of an energetic craft movement and well organized and well led strikes, the second

emphasized that "it is not our intention to be on a collision course with the Hungarian concept of the State and it is not the purpose of our paper to create difficulties for the Hungarian government when it is engaged in the great task of regenerating our nation; not only our sense of justice and patriotism prevents us from so doing but our determination as well, which is to cooperate with all that is at our disposal in creating a Hungary where all the peoples are independent, free and happy."

The bourgeois-nationalist and class-collaborationist tendencies grew increasingly prevalent in the printers' group rallied around the *Legyen világosság* (Let there be light) trade paper. Even the *Typographia* was "too red" for this group and its members expressly and openly worked in the employers' interests. The October 5, 1888 issue had an article which, voicing the patriotism of the workers, was willing to surrender the workers' right to vote if the representatives of the ruling class would undertake to represent the interests of the working class as well. These oppositionalist trends with nationalist slogans indicate petit-bourgeois illusions.

We also have to mention the camp grouped around the *Reform* magazine, which started in March 1889. Its leading contributors were the known radical skilled workers of the eighties. It was on their account that the paper often struck a radical, class-combative note. "We are socialists", wrote the responsible editor in the August 31, 1889 issue, "and not afraid to declare that we see the workers' cause coinciding with a great social revolution." The positions taken in the *Reform* and its Hungarian-language counterpart, the *Előre* (Forward), started in January 1890, did not fundamentally differ from the general social-democratic views of the time on the craft society question. But definite differences became obvious when compared to the publications of the Party leadership. Both the *Reform* and the *Előre* gave considerably greater emphasis to the significance of training workers and the economic tasks of the craft societies. They emphasized assistance for the unemployed, the craft societies' sick and disabled relief and the importance of compiling statistical surveys of the workers' conditions. They passed judgement on the Party leaders because, starting from an opportunist stance, they did not conduct an energetic craft organizing policy.

The Hungarian trade-union movement was progressing only slowly because of these ideological-political differences when the Second International was founded in the summer of 1889. The division inside the Party was reflected by the Hungarian delegates at the founding congress. Representing the oppositionist Budapest cobblers, J. Papp, an Austrian social democrat, spoke at the congress opposing Ihrlinger who gave the official report, and criticized the lackluster propaganda activities of the Party leaders and the latter's loyalty to the government. He also mentioned the importance of the craft movement.

Besides those ideological-political objectives which the Paris Congress accepted in the spirit of the teachings of Marx and Engels, the resolutions containing the everyday economic demands of the working class were of great

significance since it was the trade-union movement itself which had to execute those resolutions.

The Congress had the following to say concerning the unification of the political and economic struggles and its organic character: "The Paris international labour congress, in the conviction that only an internationally organized proletariat can liberate work and man, win political power and begin to expropriate the expropriators and nationalize the means of production, taking into consideration that the capitalist productive method has expanded into all countries with a modern culture, that its development entails the increased political repression of the proletariat as well as its mental and physical demoralization, considers it therefore to be the duty of the labour parties to move against the destructiveness of the capitalist system and demand effective protective legislation."

The concrete demands of the Congress, which made a great impression on the Hungarian trade-union movement and influenced contemporary social-political endeavours, were as follows:

1. a maximum 8 hour workday;
2. prohibition from work of children under 14 years of age;
3. termination of night shifts, excepting those branches of industry where the type of work involved necessitates it;
4. prohibition of women working in jobs where conditions are injurious to health;
5. termination of women and those under 18 years of age working at night;
6. a continuous 36 hour rest period per week;
7. shutting down those sectors of industry where conditions are harmful to health;
8. termination of the *Truck*-system;
9. payment of wages in cash;
10. termination of private job referal agencies;
11. closing down of private employment agencies;
12. establishment of a factory supervisory system.

The establishment of the Second International started developments in the Hungarian labour movement which led to the reorganization of the Party and the convening of the first congress of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. At the initiative of the Viennese party leadership, the Austrian and Hungarian social-democratic leaders met in Pozsony on September 15, 1889, to discuss the tasks relating to the growth of the Hungarian labour movement. The participants at the conference came out for launching a vigorous social-democratic agitation program and intensifying their propaganda efforts in accordance with the resolutions of the 1889 Paris congress. They decided to relieve Antal Ihrlinger from his party leadership post and to strengthen the leadership with the addition of Pál Engelmann and Simon Stern.

The resolution of Pozsony were felt instantly in Budapest. We can read in a police report of September 23, 1889 that "the local leaders of the so-called

General Workers', that is, Social Democratic Party conducted a closed meeting during the evening of the 21st of the current month at the premises of the Budapest Workers' Circle at which the local workers' societies were represented by their shop stewards". According to the October 4, 1889 issue of the *Typographia* it was decided there that the "present leaders resign in favour of other, even unknown persons" and, further, "to start a single party which will be above all the craft societies". From this it obviously follows that, corresponding to the earlier years, the craft societies or their shop stewards had a decisive say in the Party's affairs and in the renewal of the Party.

It is indicative of the success of the autumn 1889 resolution that, relative to the preceding years, during 1890 large-scale, almost stormy developments took place in the Hungarian (primarily in the capital's) labour movement. New societies were formed, many strikes broke out and there were several workers' demonstrations. One event stands out from the rest, a mass demonstration of workers, incomparably larger than anything previous and that was May Day, 1890. The number of craft societies, according to the survey reporting the conditions of 1889–1890, was notably greater than at the beginning of the eighties. In Budapest, the iron and metal lathe-operators, iron founders, wood-turners, coppersmiths, raspers, blacksmiths, machine-operators, cart manufacturers, painters, pouch-makers, harness-makers and saddlers, tanners, carpenters, cobblers, boot-makers, furriers, hat-makers, brush-makers, bakers, butchers, stonecutters and coopers had functioning craft societies. (Some earlier established craft societies, such as the bricklayers' did not operate regularly.)

However, the growth did have its limits: the craft societies were in the main only active in the capital; in a few rural towns, where there were such societies, they were most likely of a general type of workers' circle or relief society (as, for example, in the capital's suburbs, in Pécs, Orosháza, Pozsony, Temesvár, Újvidék, etc.). Few craft societies were national. Outside of the printers, who were the vanguard of the movement, the ironworkers, lumberjacks and some other crafts were taking the initial steps toward founding a national trade union. The membership of the organizations was small, its fluctuation great and the societies were hampered in their function by financial difficulties. There were no regularly published trade papers outside the printers' *Typographia*. [In 1889 *Az asztalos* and in 1880 *A kőfaragó* (The stonecutter) got started.] There was no organized contact between the societies of related crafts and neither was there a regular network of the shop stewards. The employers did not recognize craft societies as yet. And lastly, the craft societies, despite earlier initiatives, did not have a central directive body. All of this indicates that in 1889–1890 the Hungarian trade-union movement had not yet got past the craft society level in its development. That only came about during the early nineties.

It was already by then clear that the craft societies were in regular contact with the Hungarian workers' socialist party, which was by then traditional, and the latter's development was inseparable from the former's activities, both ideologically and organizationally.

THE LINKS BETWEEN THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HUNGARY AND THE TRADE UNIONS FROM 1890 TO 1914[1]

by
Ernő Kabos

The form and content of the connections between the workers' parties and the trade unions have been, for the past century, the source of passionate debates, differences of opinion and conflicts within the national and international workers' movement. This problem is rooted, on the one hand, in the interconnection of the political and the economic aspects of the class struggle and, on the other hand (according to the Leninist formulation) in the dialectics of the relationship of the vanguard and the mass movement.

Marx and Engels have outlined that "classic" method of developing the movement, following which the workers' spontaneous and *ad hoc* grouping and their later constant economic struggles end up as a political fight. The reverse of this occurs when the already established labour party gains hold of the economic movement in order to obtain a solid mass base. This latter characteristic tends to become more noticeable when the workers' movement had a late start or when the political and economic movements were organized simultaneously or when the party was organized before the trade union.

Lenin referred to this characteristic of the workers' movement in his much debated and often distorted transmission theory. However, already before Leninism, political movements had tried to use the economic movement for the transmission of their intellectual and moral energies. Social-democratic parties everywhere have always considered the trade-union mass base to be indispensable.

A trade union encompasses masses within its ranks and it carries out a variety of activities; this is what makes it potentially quite influential in society. Not only the labour parties, but also political forces opposed to them became quickly aware of this and all penetrated the trade unions to win converts to turn them into their own mass base, their own transmissions.

[1] Hungarian terminology distinguishes between the so-called craft societies with only local authority and the trade unions which operate on a national level. The evolution of the craft societies into trade unions occurred during the period under present discussion and consequently those terms are used interchangeably because in terms of their contents the work of the craft societies was synonymous with that of the unions.

The fact is that the various labour trends and the numerous anti-socialist political groups tried to turn the unions into an extension of themselves, thereby destroying the unity of the movement and creating ideological and organizational divisions.

During the period presently under review, the European workers' craft movement showed a most varied picture in terms of its political orientation and its relationship to the labour parties. The various trade-union trends showed up most clearly the differences. Several of these trends completely rejected socialist and followed other, anti-socialist political objectives.

The British Trade Unions reflected the aspirations of the workers who were developing a bourgeois mentality. They were never apolitical but, and this is unique in Europe, they created and controlled the Labour Party which represented the Trade Unions in Parliament. The leadership of the Trade Unions rejected all socialist perspectives and blocked the growth of the socialist trade-union movement in Great Britain. At the time, the socialists were in a minority in the Trade Unions. Nevertheless, it was from the British Trade Unions that European workers adopted, directly or indirectly, many methods and forms of economic struggle and of organizing itself.

Various bourgeois political groups established craft organizations in order to disorganize the growing socialist movement on the Continent.

Religious craft organizations were started under the direct or indirect guidance of the Church or, rather, of the Christian-socialist parties. Thus were started the Christian trade unions which attained not insignificant achievements especially among Roman Catholic workers in many European countries. Protestant and Jewish craft organizations were also functioning.

Bourgeois-liberal political groupings contributed to the establishment and leadership of considerably strong craft organizations in several countries. The destructive effect of the trade unions established by nationalist parties was also of consequence.

In several developed capitalist countries the employers formed so-called "yellow" organizations in their plants under their personal control in the interest of "class cooperation". (The "yellow" designation was adopted by these organizations to differentiate themselves from the "reds" and eventually every organization which opposed class struggle was branded with this label in the movement.)

Without doubt, the strongest trade unions in Europe were those which based themselves on the Marxist analysis of the class struggle and viewed themselves as part of the social-democratic movement.

However, the emergence of various trade-union trends was not dependent solely on whether they stood for or against socialism; different tendencies had developed within the socialist labour movement itself. The outlines of the Leninist analysis of the relationship of the party and the trade union were already

present at the beginning of the century. However, at the time, it had little influence internationally.

The Left and the Orthodox Marxists in the West-European labour movement believed that the party and the unions needed to be in close contact. There was no actual conflict on this issue at that time between the Leninists and the Orthodox Marxists. Most of the leaders of the social-democratic parties accepted the Orthodox Marxist analysis of this question. However, around the turn of the century, under the influence of trade unionism and Bernstein's revisionism, views that the unions should be free of politics, that is, neutral, and that the party and the union should be separate and work independently, started to gain strength in the parties' right wings and among the leaders of the large unions. The conflict in views between the party and the union leadership often led to conflicts between the organizations themselves.

The syndicalist trend developed within the international labour movement during the nineties of the past century and grew considerably during the first decade of the present one as an antidote to reformism, following the penetration of anarchist ideas which were simultaneously modified in the process. According to syndicalism, the best way to bring about a revolutionary situation was through radical economic struggle, primarily a general strike, and the best organizational form was a revolutionary trade union which, of course, scorned social welfare activities. It demanded a position of primacy for the trade union and considered the labour party secondary or simply superfluous.

The organizational divisions were present in every trade-union movement in Europe. The clearly ideologically motivated divisions, cloaked in organizational theories, were aggravated by essentially similar political deviations. In some countries rivalries broke out between the *centralist* (national craft organizations, branch union cartels) and the *localist* (local, mixed craft organizations) trends.

In certain countries these political and organizational divisions were accompanied by intense debates about the labour party and the trade unions. The debate was repeatedly on the agenda at the international forums of the labour movement.

The most significant discussions of this topic at that time were during the 1907 Stuttgart Congress of the Second International. The various representatives of the trends within the movement, the Russian Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, the German Orthodox Marxists and Bernsteinists, the French syndicalists, etc. expressed their views on the relationship of the party and the unions. The accepted majority decision after the intense debate reflected the views of the Orthodox Marxists. It emphasized the equal importance of the political and the economic struggle, the necessity for independence for both the party and the trade-unions, with close ties and mutual assistance between them and it condemned craft egoism and the idea of there being any common interests between capitalism and labour.

Lenin had a high opinion of this decision because, although it only partly suited the Bolsheviks' stand, it morally weakened the ideas of the "neutralist" revisionism of the unions and of the syndicalist trade-union hegemony.

TRENDS IN THE HUNGARIAN CRAFT MOVEMENT

The ideological and organizational division of the international trade-union movement unavoidably affected the Hungarian labour movement as well.

Outside of the social-democratic trade unions there were non-socialist and even anti-socialist craft organizations as well. They can be divided into two groups according to origins:

a. *Those which carried on work of those organizations which had started before the socialist movement existed.* Already in the fifties and sixties of the past century, preceding the era of militant craft organizing, several craft societies existed based on the idea of self-help (e.g. the printers of Pest in 1848). These did not carry out economic struggles; their patrons, honorary members and most often their presidents were the employers. After the end of the sixties there were two distinct types of organizing: one based on self-help, the other on class struggle. Relief societies continued and some of them still functioned after the turn of the century and even in the 1910's; later, while still rejecting the socialist movement, they withered and died beside the militant organizations that functioned parallel to them. In other instances the relief society accepted the concept of class struggle, extended its activities and either became a social-democratic organization or merged with the growing craft society.

b. *The craft groups which were established to disorganize the socialist organizations.* The first on the scene was the nationalist countermovement. With "patriotic" slogans and opposition to internationalism, "national democrat" groups appeared in certain craft societies at the end of the eighties. Preceding the 1st Congress of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, the National Democratic Labour Party was organized in 1890 and, with the support of the authorities and the employers, started organizing craft societies. Its followers formed opposition groups in several craft societies, in others (e.g. the printers) even got into positions of leadership, started trade magazines and in certain crafts (e.g. the carpenters) temporarily took over the leadership. Eventually they lost ground and gradually disappeared after the turn of the century.

At the same time the Christian trade unions appeared under the guidance of the Catholic People's Party and later, under the Christian Socialist Party. They were the strongest and most lasting of the counterforces to the social-democratic craft movement. They organized viable groups in several crafts and also managed to organize in occupations which the social democrats had not as yet been able to involve (e.g. health service employees).

"Patriotic" craft organizing, rejecting class struggle, was also going on under the auspices of the Independence Party. (An organization of this type operated among railway workers form the beginning of the century to 1918, whereas the militant railwaymen were in a legal organization led by social democrats from 1905 to 1908, which after that became illegal.)

Certain office workers were organizing on a bourgeois liberal basis. In certain

crafts (e.g. the various sectors of the catering industry) there were "yellow" organizations operating under the direct control of the employers.

Some organizations gradually, others with several changes in direction – some of which resembled putsches – switched from the "nationalist" base to the social-democratic camp (e.g. the blacksmiths, bookbinders and teamsters).

The non-socialist and the anti-socialist craft movement in Hungary, although not insignificant, never did attain the same proportions as it did in Western Europe. In part this was on account of the Hungarian proletariat's economic and social circumstances and the related radicalism, which were different from the West, and partly it was the result of purposeful social-democratic organizing.

THE THEORETICAL AND LEGAL BASES OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Initially there was some indecisiveness in the ranks of the Hungarian socialists in their evaluation of the craft movement. The decisive positive turn came at the end of the eighties with the rise of the radical group of the General Workers' Party.[2] The leaders of the radicals brought, with modifications, the Austrian radicals' views on trade unions into the Hungarian movement.

The radicals had a healthy effect on the growth of the trade unions: their ideological clarity was coupled with active organizing. Consequently, the element of spontaneity in the movement was gradually pushed into the background, although it was never completely overcome, and it gave place to well defined social-democratic activities, affording a greater perspective. Pál Engelmann, the most accomplished and energetic leader of the radical group, gave a comprehensive account of his views on the trade unions at the autumn 1889 Conference of the General Workers' Party. His views were confirmed at the Social Democratic Party's 1st Congress in December 1890 where the trade-union question was debated as a separate issue on the agenda and once again the radicals' views prevailed.

The influence of Marxist concepts were clearly discernible in their ideas regarding the importance of the workers' movement, the elimination of inner rivalries, the commodity character of labour, class organizing, the development from spontaneity to consciousness, the transformation of the economic struggle into a political one, the educational function of the trade union and the revolutionary perspectives opened up by craft organizing.

Their ideas found fertile soil and took root in the labour movement, thereby providing a firm foundation for the connections linking the political party and the trade unions. Most of them remained in force even after the radicals themselves were no longer in the leadership of the Party.

[2] The General Workers Party of Hungary was a social-democratic type of political party, founded in 1880; at its 1890 Congress it adopted the name Social Democratic Party of Hungary.

The organization of craft societies was considered to be a Party objective. This was reinforced by a congressional decision. They made it obligatory for Party members to join trade unions and for the Party leadership to contribute to the development of the craft societies "by word and deed". In some of their declarations there was even reference to exercising the Party's influence on the trade unions.

Outside of these fundamental principles, the concrete development of the ties between the Party and the trade unions was decisively influenced by the peculiar legal position of the labour party in Hungary during the dualist era.

The official legal interpretation sharply differentiated between a society and a political party. A society was allowed to function only by permission of the Ministry of the Interior, with approved by-laws, whereas neither permission nor approval was required to start a political party. However, the Party was not allowed to build up a membership or collect dues and could only use its premises for administrative purposes. Police permits had to be obtained to hold meetings or congresses and such events were supervised by the police.

Number 2240/1906, IIIa ordinance of the Royal Hungarian Minister of the Interior, addressed to the capital's Mayor, among other topics, stated the following: "...The national organization of any political party does not require special authorization. Only societies with government-approved by-laws may collect dues and no permit is to be granted for the collection of party dues."

Therefore, according to the provisions of law, the legal party was in effect only a party leadership. This was so with all parties and it actually suited the bourgeois parties of the time which did not particularly care to have a proper membership. A workers' party, however, could not do without members; it had to find a way of circumventing the law.

The opportunity offered was to have the members of the societies (table societies, workers' circles, reading circles, workers' education societies, craft societies) which were formally and legally separate entities, operating with by-laws and authorization, constitute the membership of the Party as well in contravention of the law. The craft societies and trade unions proved to be the most suitable and lasting for this purpose.

This legal situation was unique in Europe. The legal workers' parties in the West-European countries were based on their legal memberships and the trade unions were organizationally separate entities. (The English situation was also unique: here the independent trade unions together with a few socialist organizations founded and constituted the Labour Party.) On the other hand, in Russia the Social Democratic Party, with both its Bolshevik and Menshevik wings, was completely outlawed.

As a result of the unusual legal situation in Hungary, the actual connection between the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions developed along lines different from other countries. To further the growth of the trade unions was not just one important task among others in the Hungarian labour movement; it was the central question of building up the Party. The Party not only exercised an

ideological influence on the trade unions but it itself grew through their development and their organizational interrelationship was considerable.

This fact was a dictated force of circumstance and an expedient method for developing and strengthening the totality of the movement.

AN OUTLINE OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL TIES

The organizational interconnection was on a large scale but never total.

Contemporary views were hesitant on this question. Some emphasized the different characteristics, different functions and the independent ways the two types of organizations evolved, while others hardly distinguished between the Party and the trade unions. This indicates the prevalence of various views but it also indicates that although the organizational ties partly obscured the distinctions between the two types of organization, they never did so completely.

The first charter of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, which was accepted at the Party's 2nd Congress (1893) and modified at the 3rd in 1894, reflected the partial organizational link-up.

Regarding the top leadership, the charter codified the already decade old practice that most of the participants at the Party's congress were delegates elected in the craft societies.

The Party leadership that was elected periodically at the Congresses was mainly made up of prominent trade-union personalities. Most of them continued to fill leading posts, perhaps even as paid officers, in some trade union or in the Trade Union Council.

The charter stated regarding the middle leadership that in certain districts (country regions, districts of the capital, towns, villages) the shop stewards elected in the craft societies were to constitute the districts' Party leadership.

The form and extent of the interconnection was most complex in terms of the membership, that is, at the grass-roots level. The charter did not refer to the general membership, which is understandable, considering the mentioned legal situation. It could not declare that the Party regarded as its own the members of organizations, mainly the craft societies, which were formally distinct from it. The charter did not clarify this question and the practice that developed was not clear-cut either.

That the charter based most of the Party's top and middle leadership on trade-union representatives indirectly indicates the actual membership situation. Due to the lack of a membership of its own, the delegates of the leading bodies could only be elected from where they participated in an organization's life, that is, chiefly in the trade unions and partly in the other society type organizations.

There was a definite wavering among the social-democrat leaders about whether to adopt the individual or the collective membership system. According to a report in the February 6, 1891 issue of *Népszava*, the Social Democratic Party's paper, Pál Engelmann had the following to say on this at the iron- and

metalworkers' meeting: "...The nationally organized crafts together constitute the strong and solid workers' party." In the July 8, 1893 issue of *A munkás* (The worker), the radical group's paper, we find the following: "...the political party is comprised of the craft societies, the political and the other workers' societies."

From these views it would be natural to conclude that the Party would adopt the collective membership idea and that the organized worker on the basis of his trade-union membership would automatically be a member of the Social Democratic Party as well. However, the charter of the Party definitely chose the individual membership system: "All individuals who accept the Party's fundamental principles and support the Party financially or morally according to their ability ahe members of the Party."

It is not surprising therefore that in practice both the individual and, to a certain extent, the collective membership concepts were in force simultaneously in the Social Democratic Party, without every trade-union member automatically belonging to it.

The Social Democratic Party never became synonymous with the trade unions, nor its sum total, nor one of its functions. Even if it could not do without the trade-union mass and financial base, qualitatively (i.e., morally and politically) it was always more and quantitatively always less.

However, the relationship between the Party and the unions did not develop as that of two separate organizations but rather each was within the other to a certain extent; that is, the two types of organizations partly overlapped without being interchangeable.

The extent and practical realization of the organizational ties may be seen through an examination of those particular organizational forms which, although based on examples from abroad, developed in a unique fashion in Hungary and became an important organizational characteristic of the pre-First-World-War movements. This unusual organizational form, embodying the ideological and organizational connection of the Party and the trade unions was the *free organization*.

On examining these free organizations, we can precisely follow the marks of the interconnection, the detailed similarities and differences between the party's and the unions' memberships, the simultaneously collective and individual party memberships and various other phases of their cooperation.

However, before going into the details of this particular organizational form, we should briefly review those historical aspects of the unions' development which originated from their close ideological and organizational ties with the workers' party.

POLITICALLY ACTIVE TRADE UNIONS

Following the energetic organizational work of the radicals, the organizational growth of the craft societies quickened and the unions' economic, social and educational activities and, most important, the movement itself became politi-

cized. The craft organizations increasingly took on social-democratic characteristics and became politically active trade unions playing a directly political role.

Although in their subsequent history we find efforts to eliminate politics, such tendencies could not gain any strength in the Hungarian workers' movement. This does not mean that politically the Hungarian trade-union movement was completely homogeneous. The various tendencies and groupings within the Party sought and gained a footing within the craft societies and occasionally divided the trade unions.

From the end of the eighties of the past century to the second half of the nineties, the social-democratic movement was characterized by the discord between the Party's radical and moderate wings and the taking of turns in leadership. This had a dual effect on the unions: on the one hand the rivalry gave a boost to craft organizing and on the other hand it blocked the way to the unity of the organizations.

The radicals spent considerable energy on developing the craft societies but the moderates were forced to follow suit in order to expand their base for the struggle. Among the radicals it was Engelmann who organized the tinsmiths' craft society, who prepared the way to a national trade union of the iron- and metalworkers and who had a leading role in the formation of the first Trade Union Council in 1891. Samu Jászai, who soon left the radicals for the moderates, was instrumental in founding a great number of craft societies. Besides maintaining an active role in the already existing craft societies in order to win them to their own side, both the radicals and the moderates initiated new societies in the capital as well as in the rural towns.

The Party feud had an echo within the craft societies as well. Energies were wasted on the fight which frequently deteriorated into personal rivalries. Some leaders changed their stands from time to time, within some craft societies there was a confusion of the battle lines, while in others, conflicts and factional feuds started. (The supporters of the two lines battled with each other within the craft societies of the printers, most iron-industry branches and the tailors.)

At crucial stages of the conflict when the Party leadership became powerless, most of the craft societies as well as the Trade Union Council became likewise paralyzed. This phase of the conflict ended during the second half of the nineties with the expulsion of the radicals from the leadership. At that time a new, centrist Party leadership came in which entrenched its own position and line (which mainly reflected the moderates' views) to such an extent that for two decades, although other conflicts followed within the movement, it was not threatened by any opposition grouping.

The character of the new leadership bore the stamp of the personalities of Ernő Garami, Jakab Weltner and Dezső Bokányi. The ideological and political experience of the new guard and its organizational skillfulness surpassed the old moderates. (Among the new leaders were some trade-union leaders who were close to the radicals during the conflict.) This Party leadership learned and adopted a few things from the ideas and methods of the radicals.

Regarding the trade unions, the new Party leadership essentially followed the line of the radicals. It continued to energetically expand the trade unions, as the by now traditional method of building up the Party, and it strengthened their social-democratic and politically involved character. The relationship of the Party and the unions continued with their deep-rooted principles and forms already worked out.

The new inner struggles repeated the events of the conflict between the radicals and the moderates when both groups had sought to build a base in the trade unions. Every trend, group and faction appearing within the socialist movement turned to the trade unions to seek its opportunities for "transmission" and build links with the masses. This phenomenon, which in many regards is also characteristic of the labour movement in general, was present throughout the history of the Hungarian workers' movement until the final conclusion of the struggle between the various tendencies.

Hardly had the radicals' and the moderates' conflict ended when István Várkonyi's "independent socialist" movement got under way. This agrarian socialist movement had only a slight ideological influence on the industrial organizations, but its agrarian craft societies carried out significant activities between 1897 and 1907.

Initially, i.e. between 1900 and 1903, with leftist demagoguery, the divisive movement of Vilmos Mezőfi, the "re-organized social democratic party", had created not inconsiderable division in the trade unions. Some of the capital's iron- and metalworkers, house painters, cobblers and boot-makers, bakers, and some rural groups of construction workers were temporarily with him. In the organization of agrarian workers he matched and occasionally surpassed the achievements of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. Mezőfi's movement gradually shifted to the right, towards a "patriotic-nationalist" line and the stronger this process became, the more it lost of its base among both the industrial and the agrarian workers. The Mezőfist trade unions had all returned to the social-democratic principles by the first few years of the 20th century. Mezőfi's line was no longer of any to consequence the labour movement after 1908.

Revolutionary movements sprang up with fresh vigour throughout the world during the middle of the first decade of this century. The Marxist labour movement broke to the fore in Europe. Russia had a bourgeois democratic revolution under a proletarian leadership, while in Western Europe mass strikes and mass movements for the vote broke out and the fast growing strength of the labour organizations was felt everywhere.

The tide of the upswing reached Hungary in the midst of a profound government crisis on the one hand and an impressive labour movement growing in strength on the other hand. It was at this time that the work of the radicals in the trade unions had borne fruit under the aegis of a centrist and solid party leadership. Every positive aspect of the tight ideological and organizational connection between the party and the trade unions was present. At that time the

labour movement became a social factor of such dimensions that it could not in any way be disregarded.

The chief features of the development of the trade-union movement at that time were: the membership rose above one hundred thousand; the organizations became national; the movement gained a firm central leadership in the form of the Trade Union Council; the expansion of international contacts; the large-scale growth of "classic" union activities such as strike organizing, collective bargaining, job referals, relief, educational and cultural activities; and effective support through mass demonstration for the party's political line.

During the two decades of the Garami–Weltner–Bokányi leadership, the organizational ties, in addition to the ideological, strengthened between the party and the unions.

In the main, it was still the trade unions' delegates who constituted the membership of the various levels in the party's leading bodies. Besides their party functions, most members of the party leadership elected at congresses also filled leading union positions.

Almost invariably the same names appear in the registries of the party and the union leadership during these two decades. And almost without exception the leaders of the party were union leaders as well and the latter features prominently in the former's leadership and as Party Congress delegates. The same person filled two or three and sometimes even more positions simultaneously in the party and the union. After the turn of the century all the national leaders had one paid post (or were employed by the sick-fund) thus being able to completely devote themselves to the tasks of the social-democratic movement.

The already close relationship of the party and the unions became even more so during this period and became obvious not only within the movement, but also to the unorganized masses of workers, the employers, the authorities and before public opinion in general.

This dynamic party leadership firmly kept the mainstream of the union movement within a social-democratic framework.

THE FREE ORGANIZATIONS

We have seen how, in pre-1918 Hungary, the social-democratic movement could not function strictly according to the existing laws despite its overall circumstance of legality. It was up to the social democrats to work out and establish an entire system to circumvent the legal restrictions. This was the case in the already discussed period and it gained increasing significance after 1905 when the "national coalition" government began a campaign of terror against the labour movement. It is due to the consciousness of the workers, their being conditioned as to the use of "illegal" means and the consistent application of such means that the organizations did not fall apart under the pressure of the terror. Past mid-1906 the creation of free organizations on a national scale was well

under way. Resort to this form in the Hungarian movement was due to the need to illegally break down existing restrictions on the right of association and assembly. The "free" designation was used to indicate freedom from legal restrictions, namely, that the movement had placed its central activities outside of official surveillance.

The initial form of the free organization and the name itself came to Hungary via the Austrian labour movement. At the end of the eighties of the past century, the Austrian authorities prohibited the unions from aiding striking workers. To get around this, the unions, within their own ranks, established a loose-knot organization called *Freie Organisation* and a strike fund out of the voluntary contributions of its members. This was most of the Austrian unions' way of collecting and managing strike funds in secret between 1890 and 1914. (With the gradual easing of the prohibition the *Freie Organisation* withered away and the existence and use of strike funds became legal.)

The Hungarian free organizations had a similar background but their character quickly changed and their significance became considerably greater. The trade unions were under the statutes concerning societies. Unlike a political party, they could establish member organizations; initially only separate local societies, but later national organizations as well, with local chapters. They could collect membership fees as set out in the by-laws as to amount and purpose.

The means of legally restricting their activities were the officially approved by-laws themselves. According to the official definition, the trade unions were solely relief and educational societies and the Ministry of the Interior did not approve any by-laws which in any way opened the way beyond these activities. It was forbidden for the unions to engage in politics and to have any contact with a political movement. And what was most important, the by-laws excluded any legal possibility for the unions to be involved in the workers' economic struggles. No mention could be made of organizing strikes, not even of providing relief to strikers. In order to ensure that strikers were not helped in any way under an unemployed or some other category, every set of the by-laws had to include one point which, by way of example, was formulated as follows in the Budapest journeymen cobblers' society's by-laws: "The participants of mutually agreed upon work stoppages may not receive assistance from the society's funds". This was the so-called "strike clause" without which the by-laws were not approved by the Minister of the Interior. It was precisely in this way that the State sought to deny the unions that function which was their very *raison d'être* in a capitalist society and which differentiated them from the previous self-help societies.

In the interest of maintaining their legality, the craft societies incorporated the mandatory "strike paragraph" in their by-laws but, under the cover of the same legality, they carried out such prohibited activities as organizing strikes, aiding strikers and being politically active.

The first form of the free organization in the nineties was the secret "resistance fund". The first of these was established by the carpenters. Its leadership went under such titles as "organizing committee", "newspaper committee" or

"agitation committee".) The Hungarian free organizations did not collect "donations" as did the Austrians; but rather assigned to their members *compulsory* "contributions to the resistance", which in fact was a membership fee. This had functioned relatively well by the nineties, thus enabling clandestine organizations, using the legal craft societies as a front, to further develop the economic struggles.

A contemporary bourgeois expert on the labour question had concluded that actually the free organizations were the real unions on account of their concrete influence on work conditions. "Is it not understandable then that the workers concentrated on these secret organizations? And it is for this reason that regardless of whatever services the craft society provides, its main task is to act as cover for these secret organizations."[3]

The social-democratic leaders themselves were of a similar opinion. A leader of the printers' union wrote that "the craft society is the framework for the content that is the free organization ... The craft society and the free organization constitute an organic whole although the two function independently. The craft society carries out cultural and humanitarian works while the free organization is the tool for direct struggle".[4]

The work of the legal trade unions became difficult during the terror of the coalition government that came to power in 1906 and consequently free organizations sprang up nationally and in every craft. Their work became more uniform and regular although local divergencies remained.

Most free organizations worked out organizational by-laws which, once approved at a meeting of delegates, were put into effect independently of the authorities, of course. The by-laws specified the economic struggle as the organizations' aim, something which the legal trade unions could not proclaim themselves. The by-laws of the Hungarian woodworkers' free organization stated that "The aim of the national free organization is to further the struggles of all workers of the wood industry for a shorter working day and better pay and to provide relief for its members in case of the strikes, boycotts, lockouts and reprisals that may occur in the course of the struggle". The by-laws of the free organizations of other crafts had similarly determined their responsibilities. It is from the minutes of the free organizations, the organizing committees, the shop stewards' collective[5] and from police and other official documents that we can

[3] Imre Ferenczi: *Munkásaink szakszervezeti joga és mozgalma történeti kialakulásában* (The historical development of the trade union rights and movement of our workers). Budapest, 1906, p. 75.

[4] Gyula Peidl: *"Szakegylet – szabad szervezet". A szakmozgalom útmutatója* (Craft society – free organization. In: The directory of the craft movement). Budapest, 1909, p. 61.

[5] These collectives of shop stewards, which belonged to one given union, were situated either in one factory or community and met either regularly or according to need in order to discuss and decide upon questions related to the workers they represented and on the line of action to follow. They had a key role in having the workers take a united stand on matters affecting and in coordinating the workers of different trades, i.e., different unions, but in the same factory.

form an idea of the methods and intensity with which the free organizations carried out these tasks which actually belonged to the trade unions.

We cannot detail here the class struggles of the pre-World War labour movement, rather, we shall try to show how the unity of the political and the economic movements and the organizational connection of the Party and the trade unions came about within the free organizations.

THE FREE ORGANIZATIONS AND THE PARTY

We have seen how legislation curtailed both the Social Democratic Party and the unions. It thwarted the party in the extension of its organization and the trade unions in their functions. Both party and union had to transgress their "legal" bounds.

In other words, it was the State itself, depriving the organizations of their rights by its decrees, which had thrust the party and the unions together and it was only natural for them to break out of their common confinement in concert. For this the free organizations proved to be the most suitable form. Here both the party and the unions were able (illegally) to accomplish things prohibited by the by-laws; the party had a membership and the unions could deal with strike matters and have a strike fund. The free organization was not only an illegal trade union but also, to a certain extent, an illegal party organization as well.

The Social Democratic Party considered the crafts' free organizations as its own base. One of its leaders wrote in his memoirs that the party had found it necessary to have such crafts' free organizations constitute its smallest units and to construct its entire edifice upon this foundation.[6]

The most revealing document on this was the report of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary addressed to the Second International's 1907 Stuttgart Congress. The report, which was published in the August 18, 1907 issue of the *Népszava*, stated that, since the Party did not have an organization as such, it relied upon the unions, which, in order to deal with strikes and be politically active, had established the clandestine free organizations. "*These free organizations constitute our Party's organizational base*". The free organizations elected shop stewards who made up the local leadership. "Whenever the Party wants to carry out an action, it convenes a meeting of the shop stewards of the free organizations through whom it can mobilize the workers in the Party's interest". In other words, the organizational interconnection of the party and the unions was actually that of the Party and the crafts' free organizations. It is indicative of the latter's consciousness of constituting a part of the Party that it was from the free organizations, after they had became nation-wide, that delegates to the Party's middle and top bodies were elected, and recommendation for expulsion from the Party had to come from the free organization as well.

[6] Manó Buchinger: *Küzdelem a szocializmusért* (The struggle for socialism). Budapest, 1946, p. 115.

The following data indicate the ratio of party to trade-union work carried on in the free organizations. The free organization of the Budapest woodturners had thirty-four meetings of its organizing committee in 1913, economic struggles being dealt with at eighteen, party matters at five, job referals at eight, working youth at five, and relief and membership contributions at nine. Together with other available data we can get a good general picture of the character of the free organizations and see that, although they mainly carried out union functions, there was also a considerable amount of party work attended to as well.

The relationship between the Party and the free organizations is also well illustrated by a letter of the Secretariat of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary addressed to the free organizations. The letter dealt with preparations for an anti-war demonstration planned for November 17, 1912, that is, a clearly political action, one point of which was as follows: "Dear Comrades! ... In the interest of the protest demonstration and mass-rally set for the 17th, we ask the free organization of every craft to convene its shop stewards and to issue a separate appeal to its members about Sunday's demonstration."

As we can conclude from the surviving documents, the Party activities of the free organizations included the following aspects: collection of party dues, political campaigns, preparing demonstrations for the franchise, dissemination of party literature, election of party affiliated shop stewards, election of delegates to district party meetings and party congresses, debates on the work of party affiliated shop stewards, discussion of the general political situation, etc. However, debate on the work of the Party's leadership itself was totally absent and that was the greatest weakness of the Social Democratic Party at that time. The only opportunity for such debate was at party congresses.

With the direction of the Party's leadership, the free organization of the various crafts mobilized the workers for every one of the political mass demonstrations of that period. These were not all exclusively concerned with winning the universal and secret suffrage as the following events amply demonstrate: the September 15, 1905 demonstration in Budapest (Red Friday) with one hundred thousand participants; the October 10, 1907 national general political strike (Red Thursday) with nearly two hundred thousand workers taking part; the October 4, 1908 "iron rod" demonstration; the May 23, 1912 Bloody Thursday, the largest ever demonstration in Hungary before the war, when the workers of Budapest fought actual street battles with the police and with the divisions of gendarmes and soldiers sent into the city.

THE EXTENT OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL INTERCONNECTIONS

An examination of the free organizations lends an opportunity for the examination of the extent of the actual organizational interconnection. But before we examine the connections, we must first determine just to what extent

was the membership of the free organizations identical with that of the trade unions. Not all of the union members were members of the free organizations because that would have meant the additional financial burden of the weekly 20–30 *fillérs* "resistance" contribution. A few examples to illustrate this: "Among the organized woodworkers there were thousands who belonged to the union but did not recognize that the free organization was at least of equal importance; recognition of its significance required greater intelligence, greater consciousness".[7]

According to the documents of the woodworkers, in 1910, out of the nation's approximately 20,000 woodworkers, about 11,000 had union membership (which was a considerably higher ratio than the national average). Out of these only 5,000 were also members of the free organization (and this was quite lower than the national average).

The 1912 annual report of the iron- and metalworkers shows a union membership of 26,723 and a free organization having 21,371 members.[8] In 1912 the painters' union had 2,236 and their free organization had 2,145 members.[9]

From all the available data we can estimate that after 1908, 80–90 per cent of the union members also belonged to the free organizations.

The organizational connection of the free organizations and their memberships to the party was more complicated. The criteria for party membership was determined by the Party's organizational by-laws. Of these, the obligation to render financial assistance to the party was the most concrete. The 1903 organizational by-laws fixed the form and amount of the financial obligation. Two types of party dues were set forth: "*Every organization* in the city and the country is required to pay party dues without exception in order to cover the costs of propaganda activities ... Additionally, it is the duty of every comrade to contribute at least four *fillérs* a month to party funds (perhaps through the party affiliated shop steward)."

In other words, the by-laws specified separate *organizational* and *individual* dues. The free organizations thus became an organic unit of the party, with the latter simultaneously maintaining the individual party membership system as well.

The 15th Party Congress in 1908 introduced three types of party dues:

a. national, individual dues (a weekly four, for agrarian workers two *fillérs*);

b. degressive dues for organizations;

[7] Jakab Weltner: *A szabadszervezet* (The free organization). Budapest (undated), pp. 17–18.

[8] *A Magyarországi Vas- és Fémmunkások Központi Vezetőségének jelentése és zárszámadása az 1912–1913 évről* (The closing report of the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Iron- and Metal Workers, for the year 1912–1913). Budapest, 1913, pp. 26 and 69.

[9] *Egy évtized. A magyarországi festőmunkások szervezkedéséről és gazdasági harcaiból. 1904–1913. Beszámoló és jelentés a Magyarországi Festőmunkások Szövetsége és Szabadszervezete tevékenységéről* (One decade of the Hungarian painters' movement and economic struggles, 1904–1913. An account of the activities of the union and free organization of the Hungarian painters). Budapest, 1914, p. 73.

c. local, individual party dues (as determined by the local leadership – generally two *fillérs*).

According to the documents, although not always on time and without much enthusiasm, the free organizations generally did pay the organizational dues. Through these payments the free organizations became a part of the Party; as far as the members of the free organizations were concerned, only those became party members who had paid separate, individual party dues. No uniform system had developed within the free organization for the payment of individual dues. Some free organizations had made it compulsory while others had merely urged their members to join the Party.

There are repeated references in the documents to payment defaults, measures taken against such practices and praise for those who paid regularly. The statements of approval and disapproval indicate that not every member of the free organization had paid individual party dues.

We are unable to trace on a year-by-year basis the individual party memberships, that is, party memberships of the members of the free organizations, but the occasional data give a clear enough picture. (The Party did not keep a record of its membership and could only estimate its size by the amount of dues coming in.)

From party documents: At the 17th Congress of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, Manó Buchinger, on the basis of dues paid, reported party membership to be nearly 43,000 between March 1909 and March 1910. During this same period union membership was around 85,000, that is, only about 50–51 per cent of union members had party memberships as well. The 19th Congress, also on the basis of the dues, reported membership to have risen to 53,000 between March 1911 and March 1912. Union membership was around 100,000, that is, 53 per cent of the organized workers had also joined the Party.

From trade union and free organization documents: The painters, in their previously quoted summary, had reported 2,236 union, 2,145 free organization and 1,491 party members in 1912. In 1913 the union had 2,120 members out of which 1,916 were in the Party, a figure considerably higher than the national average. The central Federation of the Iron- and Metal Workers reported on the number of those paying party dues in several of their annual reports according to which in 1906 out of 18,325 free organization members approximately 9,000 were party members. Some data on local and craft free organizations belonging to the Federation were as follows: The tinsmiths and plumbers had 1,500 free organization and the same number of party members in 1906; the blacksmiths, however, had only 200 party members from among 692 free organization members. In Erzsébetfalva, out of 392 ironworker free organization members, 350 had party membership. In Kaposvár, the ratio was 50 to 45 and in Salgótarján 78 to 55. In 1907, the Federation had 24,594 members and its free organizations 22,761, out of which 19,986 also belonged to the Social Democratic Party of

Hungary. Out of the Federation's seventy-three craft and local groups, the payment of party dues was compulsory in fifty-five and they reported an equal number of members in both the free organization and the Party. In 1912 the iron- and metalworkers had 26,723 union, 21,371 free organization and 21,236 party members.

These data, however random and probably imprecise, nevertheless do unquestionably indicate that members of the free organizations and the unions were not, as individuals, automatically also members of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary.

Taking all the available information together (and taking into consideration that the ratio was likely to be lower in those organizations which did not issue reports) we can conclude that at most 50 per cent of organized labour had belonged to the Party during the decade preceding the First World War.

THE ILLEGALITY OF THE FREE ORGANIZATIONS

The existence and activities of the free organizations were, in the judicial sense of the word, illegal. (The concept of illegality that we associate with the underground work of the communists during the Horthy-era with its attendant perils cannot be compared to the illegality ot the free organizations.)

Many aspects of the illegality of those times seem peculiar. The reader may well wonder as to what kind of "illegal" organizations were those which had regular congresses with several hundred participants, which openly published their by-laws, congressional minutes, often even the names of leaders, financial reports and occasionally even did so together with their cover organization, and which discussed their affairs in the legally authorized press!? It is furthermore uncommon that representatives of an "illegal" organization negotiated with those of the employers' organization, often with someone from the State authorities presiding, and they also participated in joint arbitration councils on behalf of the workers.

The Trade Union Council itself operated without the sanction of the authorities, without by-laws; as far as the Ministry of the Interior was concerned it was illegal, but for the Ministry of Commerce it was a negotiating partner, the representatives of which sat in the committee of the government employment commission.

The authorities were fully familiar with the entire mechanism, function, party connections, personnel and financial situation of these "secret" organizations and it would have been relatively easy to destroy them. However, such a step was never taken because these free organizations, despite being illegal, were never revolutionary in content. They functioned both economically and politically in a reformist way. They merely performed tasks which West-European reformist labour parties and unions carried out openly and legally. The free organizations were led by the same reformists as the legal organizations.

Therefore the question would be more appropriate this way: why did the government not allow all this to be legal? Why did it not grant the reformist Social Democratic Party the right to build up a membership and the unions the right to organize strikes? Not only are historians asking this, but it had already been voiced at the time by social democrats and in bourgeois, even in official circles as well. An official of the capital's mayoralty wrote the following in his report on the iron- and metalworkers' free organization: "It would be expedient to allow the free organizations to get on a legal footing through a redefinition of the statute on assembly rights and thereby to come under the regular supervision of the authorities."

However, the government did not share this view. It refused to allow either the party or the unions outside of their "legal" bounds, and this made it possible for it to continuously harass the movement, impressing upon them the full weight of its authority at will.

This dual aspect of the government's conduct, on the one hand to force into illegality and harass it and, on the other, to tolerate the movement's essential functions, reflected the internal contradictions of the Hungarian ruling class. In the interest of developing the national economy along modern, capitalist lines, the liberal wing was quite open to "Europeanizing" the workers' situation. This meant the legalizing and the channelling of the labour movement after the Western model. But other ruling groups could only deal with the problem in the "traditional" authoritarian fashion. István Tisza's Ministry of the Interior decree (No. 55.154 1904) was typical of this dualism in stating that strikes were the workers' rightful means of self-protection and adding that the organizing of strikes was prohibited and illegal.

The instable power relationships within the ruling class were also mirrored by a certain vacillation in the government. Its line on the workers alternated between the authoritarian and the liberal. Despite modern concepts slowly gaining ground, the legal restrictions on the labour movement, which necessitated illegal forms and methods, were in force during the entire period. The government often exploited its opportunities for harassment and reprisals. Its true intent was revealed by the fact that most often it was not after the illegal organizations, but rather their legal covers, the unions, on the pretext of "by-law violations". Manó Buchinger wrote in his previously quoted memoirs that "the free organizations had their own managements and kept separate books and billings. They had to be on their guard lest there be a trace of this dual function in the organizations' books; it was precisely such slips that the authorities searched for".

But, the unions and the free organizations were rather poor in carrying out conspiratorial tasks. Not only in their legal publications, but also in their conduct of internal affairs and in their records, they confused union and free organization matters despite the fact that the unions' documents, financial records, etc. were under the regular supervision of the authorities. Only during the occasional terror-campaigns did they tighten up on secrecy. The painters, in their summary of a decade, wrote that "it was not infrequent that the leaders of the free

organizations had to pack up in a hurry and flee from one place to another like some hunted animal ... ." The most ferocious of such campaigns occurred between 1906 and 1909, resulting in the free organizations becoming nationwide.

The authorities repeatedly uncovered irregularities, which was the result of the slip shod attitude to the requirements of the conspiracy and led to several unions and hundreds of local groups being suspended, many even disbanded. The authorities' reports and decisions, following the investigation, all contained data relating to the illegal activities of the free organizations and the connections between the Party and the unions, namely, dues paid to the Social Democratic Party, Party-stamps for dues paid, "resistance" fund, *Népszava* subscriptions, contributions to the Trade Union Council, strike organizing, relief to strikers, etc.

The statement of the Ministry of the Interior (in 1907), disbanding the bricklayers' section of the MÉMOSZ (National Federation of Hungarian Construction Workers), gave a precise summary of the situation: "For the irregularities, the leadership wants to blame the Trade Union Council, the free organizations and the shop stewards, all of which are unknown to the authorities, that is, all of which function without approved by-laws. However, the investigation ascertained that the members of the mentioned organizations are none other than the leaders of the Federation, of its branches and of the rural groups. This is made unequivocally clear by the speeches at the most recent conference of the free organizations concerning 'resistance' fund, etc. and by the various data collected in the course of the investigation, one of which carried Sándor Garbai's statement that the affairs of the national 'resistance' fund and of the free organizations might only be conducted in secret".

The unions learned the way to a more effective conspiracy at the expensive cost of suspensions and dissolutions. In the course of the reprisals most had scrupulously divided the legal from the illegal and all traces of the free organization disappeared from official union papers and premises. But not so from the life of the movement, indeed, it was to the contrary: the illegal movement became more widespread and reached a higher level.

THE OPPOSITION TO ORGANIZATIONAL INTERCONNECTIONS

For a considerable time, the partial interconnection of the Party and the unions spurred the latter's political and economic development. However, it was precisely the large-scale growth of the mass movement which made the lack of an independent, organizationally developed, revolutionary Marxist party most keenly felt.

By the time the organizational interconnection in the form of the free organization attained its highest stage, it had already become the focus of passionate opposition within the labour movement. Various oppositional groups

with various motives sprang up within the movement after 1905 demanding the organizational separation of the Party and the unions and the construction of independent party organs.

The left wing of the social-democrats, headed by Gyula Alpári and Béla Vágó, was in favour of a revolutionary labour party. They quite rightly pointed out that the free organization was an insufficient form where political activities were secondary and the only activity of primary importance regarding the Party was the collection of the dues. There were no opportunities for an active party life, nor for the supervising and influencing of the leadership.

At the Party's 16th Congress in 1909 Béla Vágó stated that "as the situation stands today there really isn't a Social Democratic Party as it does not have a democratic structure. The workers do not take part in the party's life, but merely carry out decisions. The exercise of the crafts draws people away from political work".

In the November 23, 1909 issue of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* Gyula Alpári expressed the following opinion on the situation of social democracy in Hungary: "The proletariat has not had a party-type organization so far, the workers could pay party dues through the free organizations and that was the full extent of their possible involvement". The Alpári led militant opposition drew a segment of the union to itself. A separatist current started in the National Federation of Construction Workers. Sections of the glaziers, pavers, cement workers and stove-setters split off and joined Alpári. (Financial disagreements played a part in the split as well.) A section of the bricklayers and stonecutters also supported Alpári and the teamsters' craft society joined him. The papers of these crafts sharply attacked the Party leadership and demanded the separation of the Party from the unions. According to the August 21, 1909 issue of the *Cementmunkás* (Cement worker) "instead of accredited delegates of the Party's political organs, it is union dignitaries who meet at the Party congresses, and this is an unnatural situation since there are no political Party organs".

Alpári was not successful in forming a new party. After 1912, all of the unions that had sided with him, returned to the National Federation of Construction Workers or the Trade Union Council and the Social Democratic Party of Hungary.

While the social democrats' left wing tried to transform the Party into a revolutionary one by freeing it of its trade-union ties, the syndicalist Ervin Szabó tried to make the unions independent of the reformist Party leadership by ideologically revolutionizing them. According to Alpári, the free organizations were prevented from thorough political action by economic struggles whereas Ervin Szabó thought that the free organizations were much too involved with politics for the economic struggle to be effective. As the latter wrote: "Can the class struggle be served by economic organizations which consider serving a political party to be more important than waging an economic struggle against the capitalist class, which is the crux of the class struggle? Their best leaders and members, its funds and time are not engaged in economic but rather in political

battles. The trade unions of today's Hungarian working class are nothing more than branches of a political party, namely of the Social Democratic Party. The economic organizations should not become the battlefield of party politics".[10]

Ervin Szabó exercised a considerable ideological and moral influence on certain elements of the social-democratic movement, who were dissatisfied with reformism and were seeking new ways. With him, the revolutionary attitude was primary and syndicalism secondary.

Hungarian syndicalism failed to attain any significant results as far as organizing was concerned. Only small groupings with syndicalist or anarchist views sprang up within various crafts either within or without certain unions. The social-democratic leaders had hardly bothered to conduct an ideological struggle against the syndicalists. Usually they were satisfied with statements of rejection and threatening declarations. In 1910, at the 17th Party Congress, Manó Buchinger said that "as far as the syndicalists are concerned, they receive the response they deserve in whatever organization they appear".

Changes had set in within the stable ranks of the leadership of the social-democratic movement. Although the personnel interconnection of the Party and the unions continued, certain leaders increasingly turned to politics (Garami, Buchinger, etc.) while others (like Jászai, Vanczák, etc.) became typical trade-union functionaries. This specialization indicated something more profound, namely, that the organizational interconnection could not be maintained beyond a certain level of development. The labour movement needed a separate party and a separate trade union.

Besides various signs of opposition demanding a separation, conflicts had developed within the leadership itself between the proponents of the pro-party and the pro-union views.

Some of the social-democratic union leaders incorporated into their rightist views the leftist attack of Ervin Szabó, namely, the idea of freeing the unions from Party control and politics. They demanded what Ervin Szabó had formulated in his already quoted work as follows: "Let the unions be their own masters! No one should try to act as their guardian! Not even the workers' own party!" Of course, the rightist leaders had a totally different conception from Szabó's about the unions made independent. Ervin Szabó demanded a puritan, militant union, one which would not deal with relief, which would be uncompromising in the struggle against capital, and would shatter the capitalist system. On the other hand, the rightist union leaders had such an organization in mind which would be styled after the English, German or the American models, which would be prosperous and cooperative with the capitalists, bargaining with them as a partner within the system and totally legal in form and method. They had sought independence from the party partly for reasons of personal ambition and partly to be rid of the

[10] Ervin Szabó: *Válogatott írásai. A szindikalizmus. Kiáltvány Magyarország munkásaihoz* (Selected works. On syndicalism. A manifesto to the Hungarian workers). Budapest, 1958, pp. 324–327.

political enterprises of the free organizations and the related persecution by the authorities.

The revisionists, too, demanded the separation of the party and the trade unions but they were quite isolated and in Hungary rather rare. According to József Diner-Dénes, Hungary was still at the stage of the anti-feudalist struggle which the working class could only wage together with the bourgeoisie, cooperation with whom was weakened by the workers' economic struggle. He urged that economic battles be minimized, but that was made difficult by the connections linking the party and the unions. Going against the fundamental Marxist principle relating to the unity of the political and economic struggles, Diner-Dénes wrote in the second issue of *Szocializmus* (Socialism) in 1910: "Just as we cannot initiate political actions in the midst of great and significant economic struggles, actions which would harm these struggles, in the same way we cannot begin an economic struggle while large-scale, decisive political actions are carried out, as that would harm the political campaign". This platform was totally rejected by the Hungarian workers' movement.

THE DILEMMA OF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP

After 1906, demands were being voiced from all sides alleging the need for separating the party and the unions. The interlocking set-up was assailed from the left, by leftist social democrats and syndicalists and, from the right, by the leadership cadre of the unions. The inner core of the party leadership, the Garami–Weltner group, defended the status quo against both lines of attack.

In order to gain a detailed understanding of the debate, the following objective and subjective factors must be taken into account:

a. The legal restrictions, to which the free organizations (and the related connections) were a response, were still in effect. Theoretically the possibility did exist for the party to build up illegally the organizations affiliated to it. This possibility was voiced from the left by Alpári's followers in the April 15, 1908 issue of the *Fuvarozó munkás* (Transport worker): "It is a question of vital importance for the party to build up the political free organizations".

The right wing adopted this recommendation and raised it at the 16th Congress of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary in 1909: "It is rather poor reasoning to claim that conditions prevent the separation of the Party and the unions because the legal basis for starting political organizations does not exist. But after all, the free organization itself rests on illegal foundations. Legality is not really a prerequisite for a political party organization to start working."

b. If illegal party organization had been established, the average worker would have had to join this party organization, i.e., the political free organization as well, in addition to the legal trade union and the free organization. As we have already seen, approximately 50 per cent of the members of the crafts' free organizations paid party dues but considerably fewer workers would have actually joined a new, independent illegal organization. Undoubtedly, such

a membership would have been the most conscious element of the Hungarian working class.

c. The government would have been far less likely to tolerate the expansion of an illegal party organization than it did in the case of the free organizations. This would have intensified the class struggle in Hungary and would have polarized the workers' movement.

d. In the discussions concerning the organizational separation and expansion of the party organizations, totally irreconcilable concepts came to the fore, such as the leadership's reformism, the Alpári group's Luxemburgist radicalism, Szabó's revolutionary syndicalism and the strictly unionist tendency of the right wing of the trade unions. The various positions in favour of the separation were not only in conflict with the party leadership which opposed the proposal but they were in conflict with one another as well.

We have to conclude on the basis of the above that during that time neither the objective nor the subjective factors favouring the separation of the party and the unions were present. We must recognize the moral correctness of Ervin Szabó's and the Alpári group's motives, as both sought to lead the Hungarian movement away from reformism, to the path of consistent class struggle. Of particular relevance is that aspect of the Alpári group's position, which criticized the lack of a revolutionary, democratically structured party organization.

But, however we may disagree with the methods, ideas and anti-revolutionary stand of the Garami–Weltner group, their rejection of the proposal for separation was realistic.

On the other hand, in no way can the position of those union leaders be justified who wanted to rid the unions of all political responsibilities knowing fully well that the party did not have, nor would it have for the time being, its own organizations.

At the 4th National Congress of the trade unions in 1908, the rightist union leaders demanded that the unions and the Trade Union Council be made independent of the party leadership. Jakab Weltner and Jenő Horovitz, the party leadership's representatives, could not convincingly defeat the attacks of Malasits, Peidl and Vanczák.

The leadership's position was even more difficult at the party congresses where, on the question of separation, they were caught in the crossfire of the right and left wings.

At the 16th Party Congress Weltner defended the status quo of the relationship by arguing that if there was a need for the free organizations in any case, why should they not be party organizations as well at the same time? "What organization is harmed by the fact that these developing bodies take care of some of the business of the Social Democratic Party as well? ... The party cannot engage in the collection of dues and related functions, whereas the free organizations are suitable for it .... ."

Samu Jászai countered this by claiming that economic struggles kept the free organizations fully occupied, leaving no time for any party responsibilities.

Weltner once again pointed out that "the comrades in a free organization can just as well be persuaded to participate in a large political demonstration as in the best of party organizations ... it is just the usual and meaningless rhetoric to say that this can be better done in a party organization".

Eventually the Garami–Weltner group had to give way. A resolution for setting up party organizations was adopted, and Weltner added that "we must be simply content with keeping the idea of party organizations alive because they cannot be realized at the present time". Only very reluctantly did the party leadership begin to establish district party organizations in the capital. In its report to the 17th Party Congress, the leadership stated that "it was successful in erecting a Party organization framework in the capital within which the Party organizations *will be able* to exercise their political rights just as any of the fraternal parties abroad".

The Party organizations of the capital were, for the time being, only a framework. Even at the 19th Party Congress in 1912, Weltner could only say that "the Party organizations today cannot as yet take over those functions which the craft organizations carry out ... the Party organizations are too weak to successfully operate in that field".

Despite the demands coming from all sides, the separation of the Party and the unions did not materialize before the First World War. The forced Party organizations were hardly active; it was the Alpári-type opposition movement which gave temporary life to the Party organization in Budapest's eighth electoral district. The Party assigned tasks, to whatever extent they were carried out, continued to be shouldered by the crafts' free organizations.

The self-confidence and prestige of the Garami–Weltner group declined during these internal struggles.

The outbreak of the World War temporarily retarded the Hungarian labour movement. During these difficult times the internal contradictions of the movement were relegated to the background.

CONCLUSIONS

a. The labour movement was not legal in its entirety in Hungary before 1914. The Social Democratic Party and the trade unions were forced to conduct a very significant portion of their activities, the most important from the class struggle's point of view, in secret, away from supervision by the authorities.

b. In Hungary, the relationship between the labour party and the trade unions was put on a Marxist basis during the nineties of the last century by the leaders of the movement's radical wing. The trade-union movement became social democratic in character as a consequence of their ideas and purposeful organizational work and this had determined its future historical path.

c. The two factors, namely, existing within a restricting legal framework and having close ideological ties, led to the large-scale organizational connections

between the party and the unions. This resulted in the leading bodies having much the same personnel and on the level of the membership in the establishment of illegal free organizations. The free organizations conducted the economic struggle which was prohibited for the legal unions and to a certain extent substituted for party organizations, for the legal construction of which no realistic possibilities existed.

d. The organizational interconnection of the party and the trade unions was not complete. The membership of the trade unions was not synonymous with that of the party. With the paying of party dues and the conduct of certain party activities, the free organizations were a collective constituent of the party. About 50 per cent of the membership of the free organizations were also, individually, members of the party, paying individual party dues.

e. The close ideological and organizational interconnection of the party and the trade unions had a positive influence on the development of the labour movement through nearly a decade and a half. The Social Democratic Party built up a strong mass base in the unions and the unions had filled the function of linking the party and the masses. In this connection the unions became a socialist school for the masses, a school of the class struggle. They had gained the respect of the workers as well as of the employers and of the State authorities.

f. In the course of the development of the labour movement, it became increasingly evident that a revolutionary vanguard was greatly needed. The various left- and right-wing groupings within the movement, with completely opposite reasons and goals in mind, all demanded that separate party organizations be set-up and that the party and the unions be organizationally separated. The party leadership around Ernő Garami and Jakab Weltner resisted this demand.

However desirable such a separation of the party and the unions may have been, it could not be realized in the given objective and subjective circumstances.

In the years preceding the First World War, only a framework of a separate social-democratic party organization was erected.

The formation of the relationship of the labour party (later labour parties, i.e., the social democratic and the communist parties) and the trade unions in a principled and purposeful manner continued to be an unsolved problem for the Hungarian labour movement.

THE ORGANIZING ROLE OF THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE ECONOMIC AND MILITARY FIELDS DURING THE HUNGARIAN REPUBLIC OF COUNCILS (MARCH 1919 – JULY 1919)

by
János Kende

In the course of the upswing in the international working-class movement during the final stages of the First World War, a bourgeois democratic revolution broke out in Hungary in October 1918. The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy dissolved and in the middle of November Hungary became a bourgeois democratic republic. On the 24th of November of the same year, the Hungarian Party of Communists was formed. Under its leadership the mass movement developed into a socialist revolution by the spring of 1919. The working class seized state power on March 21, 1919 and the Republic of Councils was declared.

The history of the Hungarian Republic of Councils has been dealt with fairly extensively by both Hungarian and foreign historians. However, certain details are still under debate. Such is, for example, the role of the unions in the hundred and thirty-three days of the dictatorship of the proletariat. To date that question has been inadequately dealt with, but, in so far as it has been mentioned, only those aspects of the highly active and rather contradictory role of the unions have been treated, which were unfavourable in terms of the socialist revolution itself. It is a fact that a segment of the union leaders were in opposition to the Republic of Councils and it is also a fact that the Revolutionary Governing Council was followed by the so-called "trade-union government" which opened the way to open counter-revolution. Although all this constitutes a part of the truth, it is nevertheless insufficient to allow for generalizations since on the other hand we also have the fact of the rapid and orderly socialization and the beginnings of the expanding system of production, and there is also the fact of the military mobilization of the proletariat, which the unions had a very active and effective role in, and we could also mention their various endeavours in the fields of labour, welfare, culture and public service.

This study will attempt to summarize how the tasks of the unions had to be transformed in wake of the victory of the proletarian revolution, how their actual role changed in the reorganization and direction of the economy and in the organization of the revolutionary armed forces. It is not our intention to make the mistake of going to the other extreme and thereby remain one-sided; we are not going to avoid the political controversies and struggles that were going on at the time both concerning the unions and within the unions themselves, in so far as they touched upon their activities of a government-type nature as well as those

new tasks that were shouldered and solved as a part of the workers' state apparatus.

The position and the activity of the trade unions within the state apparatus of the Hungarian Republic of Councils were determined, on the one hand, by their character and amassed experiences acquired in the course of their history and, on the other hand, by some new factors such as the establishment of the bourgeois democratic republic and the founding of the Hungarian Party of Communists and its becoming the leading force of the revolution.

THE HUNGARIAN PARTY OF COMMUNISTS AND THE TRADE UNIONS

It is well known that the communist parties of various countries, all of which were established following the victory of the proletarian revolution in Russia, were at the beginning shunning the trade unions which were under social-democratic leadership. It is less well known that the Hungarian Party of Communists, although bearing many of the characteristics of "leftism", was one of the few positive exceptions to this. It was quite clear to Béla Kun and his comrades, just back from Russian prisoner-of-war camps, and to most representatives of the Hungarian Left that the revolutionary party they were about to establish could not remain aloof from the trade unions which embraced large masses of workers and could not afford to surrender this battle ground to the social democrats.

Already at the outset of their activity, the communists had some significant union positions which gave them a good start. The communist Ede Hlepkó was a committee member in the largest union, the Iron and Metal Workers' Federation. József Mikulik, a shop steward at the Aeronautics Works in Mátyásföld, gained the respect of his fellow workers in the hard struggles during the First World War; as did another shop steward, Rezső Szaton, who first worked at the Ganz-Fiat, then at the Gun Foundry at Győr and who later became a communist. Among the prisoners of war returning from Russia was Ferenc Jancsik who had played an important role in the leadership of the ironworkers' free organization before the war and had a good reputation in the movement. Károly Vántus had filled numerous party and union posts before the war. Béla Szántó, one of the leaders of the Hungarian Party of Communists, was elected president of the Federation of Employees of Private Firms during early December in 1918. Four communists were members of the Central Leadership of that federation, among whom were Ottó Korvin and Béla Vágó. There were communists in the leadership of the chemical workers' union and among the shop stewards at the airplane factory of Aszód. The communists were quite influential in those unions which were started during the revolutionary upsurge that followed the First World War, i.e., in those of the white collar workers employed in industry, in public transport, and in those of engineers, teachers and civil servants.

The majority of the leaders of the new party, including both those who had

remained in Hungary during the war and the returnees from Soviet Russia, were seasoned fighters of the Hungarian working-class movement. They had a thorough understanding of the unions' special role in the political, economic, cultural, cooperative and sport life of the nation. They could clearly see that the trade-union movement was rapidly growing in strength. At the time of the revolutionary upsurge following the close of the war, the unions had nearly achieved the total organization of the workers and employees, and after the decades-long, often bloody struggles, their reputation had remained more or less intact even during the difficult years of the First World War. Recognizing the significance of this, Béla Kun sought contact with the leaders of those unions which had grown considerable during the closing period of the war and when he could not come to terms with the leadership, he turned directly to the organized workers in order to gain some freedom of movement within these bodies which were monopolized by the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. It was his longer-term goal to win the workers to the revolutionary line of the Hungarian Party of Communists.

The trade union politics of the Hungarian Party of Communists were developed through debates within the party. Béla Kun had referred to these debates several times already before the time of the Republic of Councils. On May 22, 1919, he had the following to say on this: "There were differences of opinion between us in those days as to what line to take concerning the unity of the unions. One group did not consider that unity to be out of bounds in terms of our tactics, while the others felt that it was incorrect to interfere with it, moreover that we had to be the ones to emphasize the unity of the trade-union movement. Our stand, which held that the unity of the unions must be preserved, was proven correct".

A few years after the defeat of the Republic of Councils he spoke approvingly of the fact that in 1918–19 the Hungarian Party of Communists did not intend to leave the unions, but, rather, to win them over to its line and he noted that only a few communists found fault with this line. In a study, written for the commemoration of the fifteenth anniversary of the declaration of the dictatorship of the proletariat, he wrote the following: "The majority of the party's leadership unsparingly opposed the suggestion of the minority, who by referring to the stand of the (German) Spartacists, wanted to boycott the unions".[1]

From some of Kun's statements it is possible to conclude that this anti-union minority was made up of the members of the anti-war intellectuals, whose mentor was Ervin Szabó who had become somewhat disappointed in the syndicalist movement as well and who had seen and welcomed in the soviets of the Russian Revolution a synthesis of the decades-long struggles of the party and of the unions. This line of thought was only pursued to the end by his disciples and

[1] Béla Kun: *Válogatott írások és beszédek* (Selected writings and speeches). Budapest,1966. Vol. 2, pp. 130 and 325–326.

followers and probably they were the ones who represented this minority grouping within the party.

The sorting out of its internal differences on this question had made it possible for the Hungarian Party of Communists to function energetically within the trade unions. As Kun wrote after the demise of the Republic of Councils: "The initial effort of the communists was directed at bringing about a state of affairs whereby communist members of a union would not have to leave the union once taking out membership of the Hungarian Party of Communists".[2] This aim was achieved by the middle of December in 1918. The shop steward organization of the Iron and Metal Workers' Federation declared that they would not prevent anyone from joining the Hungarian Party of Communists. This decision was debated by the organizing committees of the various trades belonging to that union and it was adopted by the biggest, the turners', on December 23rd. A similar stand was adopted by the shop steward collective of the chemical-industry workers and also by the leadership of the printers. These served as precedents for the entire trade-union movement and by the end of 1918 and early 1919 communist factions were established within the various trades.

Following these initial successes, the leadership of the social democrats, having taken a sort of wait and see attitude on account of the German revolution, went into a counter-offensive within the unions and in the Labour Council around the middle of January 1919. The communists were expelled from the Budapest Labour Council and the resolution stated that in so far as they were "trouble makers" they had to be thrown out of the trade unions as well. Thus the better known communist union leaders had to surrender their posts.

However, a general expulsion of the communists from the unions did not take place. Although the leadership of the Iron and Metal Workers' Federation managed to get twenty well-known communist leaders expelled and similar witch-hunts went on in the miners' union which was under rightist leadership, as far as the other trades were concerned the shop steward collectives only adopted resolutions to the effect that they were in *general* agreement with the line of the Social Democratic Party and that they *generally* opposed the breaking of unity, but quite often the communists were not mentioned as such. These unions refrained from anything drastic such as the Iron and Metal Workers' Federation's stand and communist factions continued to function within them.

The communists' political line within the unions essentially served the same aim as that of the party in general, which was to develop the bourgeois democratic revolution over into a socialist revolution. It struggled against the efforts of the social democrats to consolidate the bourgeois democracy and at the same time it fought hard to win the broad masses to the program of the Communist Party, of socialist revolution, of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The trade unions had their own idea about the bourgeois democratic transformation; they had developed it already during the First World War. The

[2] B. Kun: Ibid., p. 74.

resolutions adopted at the May 1918 Congress of the Trade Unions had not only demanded social reforms, but also made a stand in favour of an increased intervention by the state, at least for the duration of the transition from the war to a peace time economy. By this they understood the exclusion of private capital from public works, the state distribution of raw materials and labour power, and state participation in the settling of conflicts between the workers and the capitalists. This concept implied that during the so-called transitional period the working class would have considerably greater political influence on the state; earlier, before the war, the unions had opposed state intervention in any form and protested any attempts to increase the extent of the state's role in the unions.

The bourgeois democratic revolution in the autumn of 1918 had brought the desired measure of political influence. The Social Democratic Party had not only become a member of the government but the very mainstay of the coalition in power as well. The trade-union leaders had tried to realize their reformist ideas by using the ministries under social-democratic control (those of commerce and industry, labour, welfare, and defense). They sought to bring about a less harsh, modern capitalist society by getting welfare legislation on the books, collective agreements, through the guarantee of the rights of the unions, factory constitutions and state unemployment insurance. All this was a great step forward compared to the pre-war lot of the Hungarian working masses, but pathetically inadequate when compared to the realistic program of the socialist revolution.

Many of the union leaders accepted posts in the bourgeois democratic state apparatus and were involved in demobilizing the working class detachments of the militia who returned from the front, in directing public corporations, managing the labour exchange system, and participating in the National Labour Affairs Council and its various departments.

The signing of collective agreements by the hundreds constituted another new step. The *Munkásügyi Szemle* (Labour review), a socio-political magazine, reported, between January and March 1919, a dozen settlements involving eight large trades and affecting either the nation as a whole or just the capital and its environs. In addition to this, in the spring of 1919 the leather workers concluded twenty-two, the construction workers in rural areas forty and in the capital nine agreements with their employers. Even in such trades which had been outside of the movement, e.g., the brick factory workers or the warehousemen of glassware wholesalers, the workers' rights got laid down in collective agreements. However, these agreements had another aspect as well: the unions' hands were tied at a time when there was an upsurge in the labour movement and the economic situation was on a downward trend.

After months-long debates, the decree on the plant committees finally saw the light of day in February 1919, falling well short of the workers' expectations since it only legalized and made obligatory the already de facto recognized right to establish shop steward committees in the plants.

It was not at all difficult for the communists active within the unions to show how the facts of daily existence wiped out all and any illusions regarding

a regulated capitalism, since the bourgeois democracy – regardless of the communists' agitation – was not heading towards consolidation but, rather, towards even newer domestic and international political crises. This fact upset the power balance between the classes and necessitated a choice between the rule of the bourgeoisie or that of the proletariat. The communist activists did not just sit around theorizing but engaged in concrete actions to upset the existing order.

The offensive against the "industrial peace", guaranteed by the collective agreements, took several forms. At a membership meeting of the Budapest stonecutters' organization, where the collective agreement was being debated, the communist speakers demanded that a uniform hourly wage should replace piece wages and one of them went as far as saying that the wage system should be done away with, the plants nationalized and the workers have a say in production. The person taking the minutes of the meeting was quite precise and added that at that point the majority of those present applauded. The secretary of the stonecutters' section had tried to get the communist members of the section expelled, just immediately before the dictatorship of the proletariat was declared, because they were agitating strongly against the coming to a collective agreement with the bosses and because they were always in favour of nationalization. The expulsions were never carried out. Elsewhere in the construction industry the tactics of the communists must have been similar because a secretariat report at a 1921 meeting blamed the communists for the failure of signing the collective agreements between the Budapest organizations of this trade and their employees.

Beginning with 1919 it happened in several trades, particularly among the printers – who at that time were a party to an agreement between the union and the employers and who had previously been the most organized and most disciplined sector of the labour movement – that "individual actions" became more and more frequent whereby strikes were initiated without the approval of the union leadership. Judged by the wording, the leaflets issued by the striking printers reveal a clear communist influence. These "individual actions" on the part of the printers evolved into a general strike by the middle of March, which, on the eve of the declaration of the Republic of Councils, did away with the agreements that had been made with the employers. The striking printers threw out the Budapest leadership, the so-called Local Committee, and replaced it with a leadership composed of communists and left-wing social democrats, who were actually leading the movement.

During January and February 1919 a general movement sprang up in the factories of the capital; later this spread to other parts of the country to remove those engineers, foremen, and directors from their posts who were particularly anti-labour in their behaviour. In most cases socialists were put at the head of the plants and supervisory workers' councils were elected to work with them. This movement was opposed by the Social Democratic Party and the unions and they tried to restrict it, whereas the Communist Party supported this initiative of the working class.

The 1919 reports of the unions all bore witness to the growing popularity of the communists. One of the most important results of their activities was that they forced the social democrats' left wing to act, or at least won their support. Within the Iron and Metal Workers' Federation – from where the most active communists had been expelled – the turners and the machinists led over twenty successful movements for higher wages in the largest plants of the capital during February and March 1919.

The Left had kept the issue of nationalization on the agenda (although the Social Democratic Party and the unions had defined it in their official stands as untimely). The Budapest Labour Council, from where the communists were expelled in January 1919 but which elected several union leaders into its ranks during February and March, had also reflected a general left-wing upsurge in its activities. In March 1919 two resolutions were adopted, one at the urging of Eugene Varga, concerning nationalization, and another, initiated by József Pogány, about getting formal contact established with Soviet Russia. In the Council itself and at other forums of the labour movement a new conciliatory attitude could be felt regarding the communists. Ignác Bogár, one of the leaders of the printers' union called on the communists and the social democrats at a printers' rally in Nagyvárad on March 3rd to "cease fighting among ourselves and struggle together against the common enemy, capitalism and imperialism, so that we may reach our final goal of a communist society as soon as possible".[3]

The memoirs of the Social Democratic Party's 1919 leaders uniformly attest to the fact of a left-wing upsurge in the middle of March 1919 among the trade unions as well. The events justified the trade-union politics of Béla Kun and the majority of the Communist Party's leadership, since at the time of the foreign-policy crisis of the bourgeois democratic government, the centre of the Social Democratic Party joined the left and the only realistic alternative led to the communists. It was this fact which made the merger of the two parties possible on March 21st and the coming about of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

THE TRADE UNIONS DURING THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

How did the trade unions react to this turn in events? The trade-union functionaries active in the leadership of the Social Democratic Party and in the party's steering committee were uniformly in favour. The Budapest Labour Council, which at that time was composed of the upper and middle cadre leaders of the unions, was most enthusiastic about the agreement between the leaders of the two parties to carry out the merger and about the declaration of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Of course, it cannot be said that every raised hand meant one and the same

[3] *Typographia*, June 6, 1919.

thing and not by any means did everyone become a leftist, much less a communist. Many trade-union functionaries, especially the leaders, were motivated by various *Realpolitik* considerations. These were compounded by the changes occurring at that time in both the domestic and the international situations.

Motives aside, the reaction of the unions to the events was positive. This was expressed in the articles appearing in the labour press hailing the March revolution, which not only lauded the power of the people but which also sought to determine the press' role within that new power. By way of example we shall mention such union papers which before the Republic of Councils had a rightist orientation and this made their declarations after the 21st rather more interesting and more valuable. The *Vas- és Fémmunkások Lapja* (Iron- and metalworkers' paper) wrote as follows in its editorial concerning the declaration of the dictatorship of the proletariat on March 28, 1919: "The changes that have taken place also alter the extent of the role of the trade unions as well. The responsibility of the representation of the workers' economic interests has become transferred to the organs of the state. As for us, our responsibility is to continue to organize the unorganized masses, take a hand in their education and to assist the government in its work of serving the working masses."

The *Famunkások Szaklapja* (Woodworkers' paper), in its April 1, 1919 editorial on the declaration of the Republic of Councils, stated that in its opinion the unions had by no means become obsolete, that is, superfluous because the proletarian state "requires tremendous stores of energy for its defense and effective functioning. The most suitable generators, pools, selectors, and distributors for this purpose are the trade unions".

The article went on to determine the tasks of the unions within the dictatorship of the proletariat as follows:

1. "... education and training and the spreading of revolutionary ideas ...";
2. "... the organization and control of the new system of production, distribution and consumption";
3. "the trade unions are to take an active hand in administration, which includes the organization and control of the armed defense of the proletarian state".

It is obvious from the above that, at the beginning, there was not even a hint of any opposition on the part of the trade unions, although certain rightist union leaders later made claims in their memoirs to that effect, trying to justify themselves. Instead, there was a readiness to cooperate, indeed, a willingness to change according to the demands of the times.

However it is true that a certain change could be felt in the attitude of the unions at the beginning of April 1919. The trade papers and the *Népszava* (People's word) spoke rather anxiously of the right of unions to exist under the dictatorship of the proletariat. What was behind this uncertainty about their right to exist?

After the defeat of the Republic of Councils, Béla Kun repeatedly returned to this question. In 1920 he wrote the following: "Many communists had only seen

the workers' council as an alternative to the trade unions and their opinion of the Party, following the erroneous thinking of Ervin Szabó, was that its participation was no longer necessary since a bourgeois democracy had been established. They wanted to eliminate the unions the same way, denying not only their right to exist under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat but also their entire historical significance". In his essay, written for the fifth anniversary of the declaration of the Republic of Councils, he stated that "... There were many people among the communists who had the idea that with the establishment of the Republic of Councils all parties had become obsolete. 'The workers' council is everything – even the trade unions must go'".[4]

Under these circumstances a certain political rivalry developed between the revolutionary workers' councils and the trade unions. Among the union leaders there developed a lack of enthusiasm and suspiciousness became common since, in addition to the debates and political in-fighting, they were also worried about the fact that in the official statements of the government there was hardly ever any mention of the unions and in crucial matters such as socialization, the direction of the socialized plants, sickness and accident insurance there was no mention of them at all.

Noting the tension, members of the Governing Council met with the leaders of the trade unions on several occasions. The communist and social-democrat commissars tried to set their minds at ease – here the lessening of internal debates and the consolidation of the domestic situation had a good effect –, but these discussions only smoothed over the problems without solving anything. The members of the government emphasized that there was continuing need for the trade unions and urged the union leaders to be active in public life, but as to just what the tasks of the unions were to be under the dictatorship of the proletariat little was said.

The demands of practice soon exercised a compelling effect on the unions' tying in with the activity of the government since – as Kun had clearly stated – the communists did not by themselves possess the strength necessary for the construction of the economic and administrative apparatus of the new proletarian state.

The most important problem was the execution of Decree No. IX, dated March 26, 1919, of the Revolutionary Governing Council, which was concerned with the socialization of plants and the placing of production under the supervision of the workers. At the April 8th meeting of the Governing Council, commissar Eugene Varga expressed his disapproval that the matter of socialization was always being postponed. The reason for the delay undoubtedly was the lack of an appropriate apparatus for carrying out the task. Varga forwarded a concrete proposal for solving this. He suggested that production councils be organized and declared himself in favour of the participation of the unions when it came to solving tasks related to the economy. Varga's proposals and critical

[4] B. Kun: Ibid., pp. 79 and 131.

judgement met with the approval of his fellow commissars, and the communist commissars in charge of socialization, József Kelen and Gyula Hevesi, were also in agreement; soon afterwards concrete steps were taken. The industrial departments of the Commissariat for Social Production and the central organs in charge of the socialization program were set up during the end of March and the beginning of April in 1919 with the assistance and cooperation of the trade unions. We also know for a fact that the setting up of such bodies was initiated by the unions themselves. For example, immediately after the declaration of the Republic of Councils a committee was set up to control production in the chemical industry, made up of the representatives of the respective sections of the chemical workers' union and the working engineers' organization. The subsequently set up chemical industry section of the Commissariat for Social Production came out of that committee (as mentioned in the August 1, 1919 issue of the *Vegyipari Munkás*). We find a similar situation in the Foodworkers' Federation, the Central Leadership of which elected from its own ranks, at its March 28, 1919 meeting, a committee to take charge of the socialization of the trade. One of the commissars, Gyula Hevesi, speaking of the departments that have been set up to represent those branches of industry which were under his jurisdiction, announced at the congress of the councils that "the department of the milling industry was set up in total conformity with the wishes of the unions... I can also state that the department of the leather and of the shoe industries was made up of union leaders... The very same thing happened in the case of the department of the textile industry".[5] The smaller trades, such as the glassworkers, had themselves represented in those departments which were in some way related to them. A decision on this was made at the March 29, 1919 meeting of the organization's leadership.

The iron and machine industry fell under the jurisdiction of another commissar, the social democrat Antal Dovcsák. Before the revolution, Dovcsák had been the president of the Central Leadership of the Iron and Metal Workers' Federation. This naturally inclined him to rely even more on the trade unions (which was even reflected in such surface details as having his office at the union's headquarters). This led to a rather peculiar organizational situation whereby the union's office in charge of the free organization was also taking care of the work of the commissariat's iron and machine industry departments. In other words, this was a case when the trade union was temporarily involved in carrying out a state function directly. With the development of the commissariat's organization, at the end of April 1919 it set up its own department for the iron and machine industry, but during the initial period of the dictatorship of the proletariat it was still the union's free organization office which took care of the election of the workers' councils in the plants and the appointment of the production supervisors

[5] *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Története Válogatott Dokumentumai* (Selected documents of the Hungarian working-class movement). Budapest, 1960, Vol. 6b, p. 145. (Henceforth: *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Története...*)

who represented the state. The office was also responsible for the supervision of the plants' request for stocks and it was involved in the allocation of the funds used to meet the payroll.

The report of the trade union's secretariat, made in 1919 after the defeat of the Republic of Councils, complained that the dictatorship of the proletariat burdened it with new tasks, but there was nevertheless an unconcealed expression of pride concerning the fact that the office had more or less satisfactorily carried out its duties.

It is indicative of the unique relationship between the trade union's leadership and the various departments of the commissariats dealing with the workers that, for example, those members who were involved in the apparatus of the commissariat had to account for their activities in that body at the meetings of the leadership of the glassworkers' organization and at that of the technicians' organizing committee.

It had soon become obvious that socialization and the simultaneous securing of the continuity of production could not be solved without an appropriate decentralized organizational structure. It was for this reason that the Governing Council established interim local and district industrial production councils. The decree of April 20, 1919 guaranteed the participation of the trade unions in the work of the production councils on a local level.

Eugene Varga, in his already mentioned April 8th speech at the meeting of the Governing Council, proposed that wages should be fixed centrally and that the direction of production and the use and allocation of supplies should be organized according to the existing political reality whereby the Republic of Councils was clearly in a situation of danger, there was a blockade against the country and the war had caused serious devastation. In the question of wages, the collective agreement signed by the Iron and Metal Workers' Federation on March 16, 1919 was taken as the model at Varga's urging, but it was also decided that before the final wording of the decree was arrived at, consultations would be held with the leaders of the trade unions.

We have no precise knowledge as to the way this decree was executed. However, as can be seen in the April 19, 1919 issue of the official paper *Tanácsköztársaság* (Republic of Councils), it is a fact that the pro tem decree of the Governing Council, dated April 17th, concerning the determination of wage scales, stated that in cases of disagreements, the trade unions had the decisive say and that the unions were guaranteed the right to initiate or to have a say in any further resetting of wage levels.

In the second half of April 1919 the Commissariat for Social Production issued those decrees which projected the setting up of trust-type directing companies to deal with each branch of industry. These decrees ensured a significant role for the trade unions in the new institutions. In addition to the supply offices there were supply distribution councils set up, which were staffed by the representatives of the respective commissariats and the related trade unions. The plant centres and offices in charge of production were also directed and supervised by a council. As

the decree, dated April 24, 1919 concerning the organization of the Clothing Trade's Office stated: "The members of this council are appointed by the Commissariat for Social Production on the basis of the recommendations of the trade union concerned. Other members are the delegates of the respective interested commissariats and one person sent by the central supply office".[6]

In actual practice the delegation of representatives to the above-mentioned councils did not take place according to the wording of the decree. Instead, the commissariat notified the respective trade union as to the vacancies to be filled, and the leadership of that union delegated people whom it saw fit for that job. The councils directing the distribution of supplies and the plant centres employed a rather broad interpretation of the eligibility of certain trades to send delegates. For example, the Construction Workers' Federation delegated representatives to the Wood, Metal, Iron, and Technical Supply Offices, and in the directory of the railroad and bridge construction workers there were delegates from the Construction Workers' Federation, the Diggers' and Agricultural Workers' Federation and the Railroad Workers' Federation. It is indicative of the connections between these offices and the trade unions that the activities of the former were discussed, and concrete decisions concerning them were made, by the leaderships of the unions. The May 30, 1919 meeting of the central leadership of the glassworkers' union debated the secretary's report on the organizational activities of the office in charge of the glass industry. Among other things, the secretary's report made mention of the fact that the commissariat asked the federation to submit a proposal concerning nominees for the leadership of the departments of the above office that were to be set up. By the time of their June 24, 1919 meeting, they had already reported on the work carried out by the office. The delegate of the union to the office in charge of the glass industry stated in his report that it was both the duty and the objective of the leaders of that office to function according to the intentions of the union.

The inclusion of the trade unions into the work of the various councils was not made out of tactical considerations, nor should it be seen as mere recognition of their moral stature. These councils had to make decisions regarding very important and touchy matters. The amount of available materials was very limited and if a certain plant was denied what it had requested it could have meant the stoppage of that plant. The unions had to share with the state organs the responsibility of these weighty decisions. Those who drew up the decree also wanted to ensure that overall interests would triumph over local interests and they sought to bring this about through the involvement of the trade unions.

A great many of the measures adopted during April openly stated that they were to be considered temporary in nature. The decree on the industrial production councils stated that "the determination of the final organization of social production will be the task of the national assembly of the workers', soldiers', and peasants' councils. Until that time pro tem industrial production

[6] *Szociális termelés* (Social production), May 3, 1919.

councils must be set up to carry out the planned socialization of the economy throughout the country and to ensure the continuity of production".[7] The decree that was issued concerning the question of wages stated that the final ordering of this problem would be the task of the Economic Council, which was to be organized later. The Governing Council intended to convene the National Assembly of Councils in the middle of April, then changed it to early May, with a congress of the united party to precede it by one or two days. They thought that these two forums could deal with, among other things, the question of determining the place of the unions in the economic and political life of the nation, through the establishment of the permanent organization of the socialist economy and the acceptance of the new organizational rules of the party. The Romanian-Czechoslovak military intervention and the resulting serious situation facing the Republic of Councils at the beginning of May had the effect of forcing an extension of this pro tem period, which in turn undoubtedly caused a certain uneasiness among the leaders of the trade unions.

In the middle of May 1919, as the immediate danger of defeat had passed, the members of the Governing Council set about getting some "constitutional" order into the domestic situation and tried to consolidate their position. Their determination was strengthened by the mature attitude of the capital's proletariat during the most difficult period, which clearly revealed that they were a class capable of forming and running a state. The proletariat's vote took the form of concrete deeds and this solidified the internal unity of the government. In this regard, the atmosphere was decidedly favourable for the preparation of a party and council congress, the agendas of which touched on several aspects of the situation of the trade unions. However, the debates around the preparations took place under different circumstances than they would have, had they been held at the earlier planned date.

The reason for the change lay in the fact that after the end of April a rightist opposition group was established from among the leaders of the trade unions. Their contrary stand was fuelled by their hurt feelings concerning the skirmishes at the end of March and in early April and by the frustration of their expectations, which were on the ascent at the time of the March turn of events; the new government restricted, or sought to restrict, their political influence. These union leaders themselves had a hand in fighting off the military defeat that was a very real possibility during the beginning of May. Had the counterrevolution triumphed, they would have lost all and any likelihood of a compromise. But as soon as the immediate danger had passed by the middle of May, oppositionist meetings were held on the political situation. Members of the government were practically summoned to these talks at which – often in the presence of members of the Governing Council – they discussed that since the immediate danger of capitulation had passed, a favourable opportunity presented itself to come to

[7] *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Története*..., Budapest,1960. Vol. 6a, p. 277.

a compromise agreement with the Entente powers. The trade-union leaders believed that a "good compromise" was the only way out of the difficult predicament and they were also of the opinion that they themselves had a better chance of getting such an agreement than the official representatives of the Governing Council. Fearing a military defeat in the upcoming Northern Hungarian campaign and seeking for ways of getting a quick agreement, the trade-union leaders got in touch with the British military mission. The Governing Council and particularly Béla Kun were aware of this, but had not agreed with this move. The talks between the rightist opposition and Captain Freeman, a relatively insignificant member of the intelligence corps, could not have led to any results since he could not promise or guarantee anything.

During the initial phase of its existence, the rightist opposition did not present itself publicly through the press, but its undisguised aim of gradually dismantling the council system managed to poison the discussions and debates that were taking place concerning the trade unions. The leftist views, which were somewhat silenced at the beginning of April, once again started demanding attention. Their most concise summation was contained in two articles which appeared in the *Vörös Újság* (Red paper) at the end of May 1919 and which dealt with the relationship between the party and the trade unions. One of the articles was unsigned, the other appeared under József Révai's by-line. Their themes and train of thought were the same, with the second article being an explanation and a somewhat softer version of the rather crudely composed first one. It is quite likely that both articles were written by Révai.

The first article stated the following concerning the party: "The party's primary role at the present time is the spreading of socialist consciousness, rather than participation in politics, that is, in the actual class struggle". In the same article, the historical role and the concrete significance of the trade unions were assessed as follows: "It has been mainly those people joining trade unions, whose economic interests have compelled them to seek such membership. This will continue to be the case. All those who want to eat have to join a union".[8]

The other article[9], signed by Révai, said much the same thing, namely, that previously and under the dictatorship of the proletariat as well it was economic need which led people to join unions. The educational work carried out by the unions was termed "praiseworthy and honest in intent", however "independent of the unions' real obligations and role it might be". The place formerly occupied by both the party and the trade unions in the class struggle disappeared, said Révai, adding that under the dictatorship of the proletariat it was the councils that waged the class struggle together with the other institutions of the proletarian state, such as the Red Army, the revolutionary courts of justice, etc., while the party's role was reduced to "ideological guidance". According to Révai, "under socialism, the trade unions will be turned into offices which will keep tabs on who

[8] *Vörös Újság*, May 24, 1919.
[9] *Vörös Újság*, May 25, 1919.

needs what. ... Union membership will not mean that the individual is a convinced socialist, but that he or she wants to eat. ... The task of the unions will be to make sure everyone gets enough to eat".

These two articles in the *Vörös Újság* contained, in a concentrated form, all that later Kun referred to as confused syndicalist blunders resulting from Ervin Szabó's erroneous ideas. The articles appeared at the worst possible moment, practically on the eve of the party congress, giving the union press an opportunity for a counter-attack in which not only the rightist trade papers took part.

There was no longer any mention of lessening the unions' political influence under the new circumstances. Indeed, one of Kun's interlocutors concerning the party program stated in the program debate that under the Republic of Councils the trade unions represented the sovereignty of the state, that to them belonged the power of the state and that the party was nothing other than the executive representative of the trade unions.

On account of the failure of the "foreign affairs" negotiations, the trade-union leaders found themselves in a touchy position and it became crucial for them to prove that their attempt to "break out" was not an undertaking limited to themselves, but that it was supported by the working masses. This led to the conferences of shop stewards, held at the end of May and in early June. Having been incited by biased reporting of the debates, the representatives of the woodworkers and the printers adopted a resolution opposing the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the Iron and Metal Workers' Federation it was only the sound tactics by the leftists that managed to avert the acceptance of the already motioned oppositionist line. According to the diary of Commissar Péter Ágoston, he saw the psychological reason for the behaviour of the shop stewards mainly in that the "trade-union leaders do not know just what their place and role are and fail to see what their tasks are. It is for this reason that they consider the trade unions *noli me tangere*!".[10]

The "official" communist viewpoint, which was close to that of the left-wing social democrats (e.g. Eugene Varga) and even certain representatives of the centre (Vilmos Böhm), was stated by Béla Kun in his five-part speech, held between the 13th and the 22nd of May 1919, in which he dealt with the modification of the party's program. In Kun's view it was absolutely necessary to divorce the party and the trade unions and he was in favour of a vanguard and closed type of labour party. He had nothing but praise for the past role of the Hungarian trade unions. As he said "the Hungarian trade unions had a great and righteous history", adding that it was only understandable that the workers were attached to their respective unions. In connection with this thought, he went on to mention the uniqueness of the Hungarian labour movement in terms of the special connection between the party and the unions, which had risen out of certain objective circumstances. He also looked at the positive aspects of this contact, finding praiseworthy the fact that the trade unions had never become

[10] The Archives of the Institute of Party History, fond 689.

politically indifferent or neutral. His presentation candidly discussed the Communist Party's internal debates and he stated unequivocally that he by no means agreed with the improper and anti-socialist view according to which the trade unions had no place under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Emphasizing the necessity for a division of labour between the party and the unions, he went into some detail concerning the new tasks awaiting the trade unions.

"To fear for the future of the trade unions on account of the dictatorship of the proletariat is not only a waste of time, but it is also stupid. At no other time have the trade unions had such significant and broad tasks assigned to them as during the dictatorship of the proletariat. One point to keep in mind, however, is that the character of these tasks will not be political, but organizational, they will be tasks in the areas of production and its supervision, which can only be carried out primarily, if not indeed exclusively, through and by the trade unions", said Kun. He went on to say that in his opinion under the dictatorship of the proletariat the trade unions become part of the state machinery, taking over the direction of production and they become "the foundation or base to which the whole of production is entrusted". Within the terms of this view, the primary function of the unions was that through them the proletariat was "to exert its influence for the organization, direction and supervision of production". A further task was "to manage the distribution of available manpower" and to ensure "discipline on the part of the workers".[11]

After the defeat of the Republic of Councils, Kun felt that his speech "barely had any response"[12], but this pessimism was probably brought about by the overall turn of events, because, in fact, this public discussion, which went on for about a month, was very significant. The foremost leader of the Republic of Councils had put forth concepts which seemed suitable – once translated into concrete measures – for the solution of the real problems of the trade unions and which had brought about the necessary atmosphere for bringing the trade-union opposition under control, although not their outright liquidation.

The meeting of the shop stewards of the ironworkers at the end of May broke up without any resolutions being adopted, but at the next one, held on June 2nd, the communists and left-wing social democrats (who were particularly strong among the turners) went into a counter-offensive and got a new resolution accepted, which was supportive of the government's policies.

Nevertheless, it could be foreseen that at the congress of the united party, where those delegates who were elected in the unions were in the majority, the position of the communists regarding the relationship of the unions and the party would not get majority support. The congress dealt with this question at its June 13, 1919 session. The communists repeatedly expressed and explained their position, but did not push things to the point of a break. Their attitude calmed tempers and although they were not successful in getting their motion concerning

[11] *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Története*..., Budapest,1960, Vol. 6a, pp. 477, 518, 541–542.
[12] B. Kun: Ibid . p. 79.

the separation of the party and the unions accepted, they were, however, able to prevent motions to the contrary from being passed.

The successful northern campaign of the Red Army had a decisive role in stalemating the opposition. Not even the most right-wing leaders could escape the spell of the victories and most of them, even if only temporarily, had renewed confidence in the Republic of Councils. This meant that by the middle of June the debate had died down and at the National Congress of Councils (June 14th–23rd) only a few odd comments reflected the heated conflicts of the past several weeks.

In the following, we shall seek to examine in detail those factors having a moderating influence on the contradictions, which, along with the development of the intendedly final organization of the socialist economy, defined the role and tasks of the trade unions within the dictatorship of the proletariat. At this juncture we are primarily thinking of the establishment of the Economic Council and the various follow-up directives and measures in so far as they pertain to the trade-union movement.

CENTRAL DIRECTION OF THE ECONOMY

The setting up of an Economic Council was first mentioned at the already discussed meeting of the Governing Council on April 8, 1919 where Eugene Varga stated his views regarding a centralized economy. His views were based on a recommendation, concerning socialization, that had been adopted by the Budapest Workers' Council in early March. In addition to this, Béla Kun called attention to the need to create the Economic Council that would serve as a supreme national and central directory.

At the May 10, 1919 meeting of the Governing Council, that is, well before the National Congress of Councils, Gyula Lengyel, Commissar for Financial Affairs, proposed that the economic commissariats should endeavour to achieve the closest possible cooperation within the framework of an economic council. The decision of the government stated that the Economic Council was to be in direct contact with the representatives of the workers, that is, the representatives of the working class were to be involved in its work. The Economic Council was to be made up of the commissars in charge of food supplies, the socialization program, and finance, as well as the delegates of the capital's workers' and soldiers' councils. Eugene Varga and Gyula Lengyel were delegated the task of drawing up a detailed plan. It was not clear from the government's statement as to whom they regarded as the representatives of the workers – the delegates of the councils or those of the unions.

The paper *Tanácsköztársaság* carried the text of the decree on the establishment of the Economic Council in its May 20, 1919 edition. This gave a clear answer to the question of worker representation and defined the tasks of the Council as the "uniform direction of production and the distribution of goods, the issuing and executing of decrees concerning the economy, and the technical and

financial supervision of production and of those organs in charge of distribution". The council had a presidium and a steering committee. Basically, the presidium took over the work of the related commissariats, and its members, the leaders of the eight departments, were mostly commissars as well.

The membership of the steering committee was set at fifty people by the decree, which further instructed that these members be delegated by the Trade Union Council, by the individual unions, and by the district production councils. The decree was emphatic on the point that "the presidium of the Economic Council must consider the opinions of the steering committee on all important issues. The steering committee may make recommendations to the presidium at its own initiative as well". The presidium of the Economic Council was instructed to "inform the steering committee without delay" of the contents of the monthly department reports "in order that they may be discussed and debated".[13]

It may have been a reason as to why the decree had become more unequivocal than the government decision that members of the Governing Council, primarily Béla Kun, but Eugene Varga too, met frequently between the two events with leading and lower-level functionaries of the trade unions at the previously mentioned series of meetings where Kun spoke, as well as at the conference organized by the Republic of Councils' trade-union opposition. They must have come to conclusions similar to those of Péter Ágoston (quoted above) and they sought to get the unions to adopt positive programs. Eugene Varga, the "father" of the final version of the decree, was in any case in favour of the unions' being involved in the direction of the economy. This is the view he had expressed at the April 2nd and 8th meetings of the Governing Council. As for Kun, he stated his opinion not only before the union functionaries, but also at the May 17th session of the government, namely, that an improvement of the working-class control over production might be achieved by the inclusion of the trade unions in this task.

The National Congress of Councils could already take into account the established practice when it accepted the Constitution of the Republic of Councils as the foremost organization in charge of the economy. The participation of the trade unions in the Economic Council was also incorporated in the Constitution.

Although the debates came to a peak, "thanks to the right wing", during the end of May and early June, the government did not hesitate to put into practice the wishes of the decree and a meeting of the Economic Council's steering committee was called for the 2nd of June.[14]

Already at the first meeting it had become very clear that those who had set up this organization did not do so out of tactical considerations and did not intend it to be a paper committee, but a strong and vital operative body.

Eugene Varga, President of the Economic Council, outlined the structure of this organization in his opening address, emphasizing that this structure

[13] *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Története*..., Budapest,1960, Vol. 6a, p. 514.

[14] Information based on the report of the newspaper *Szociális Termelés*, June 11, 1919.

(presidium, steering committee, and local economic councils) constituted the final order of the economic organization of Hungary under the council system. Going into a little more detail concerning the steering committee, he said that the decisive role belonged to the trade unions. The steering committee was to share in both the decision making and in the responsibility together with the council's presidium, thus avoiding the situation whereby such economic guidelines would be issued which might win the disfavour of the unions. Another thing he mentioned was that the unions, in addition to the district industrial production councils, the local councils, and the representatives of the cooperatives, would also be represented in the local economic councils. (The local economic councils had been established on the basis of a decree issued on the 15th of June, but hardly a month had passed when the Governing Council terminated them because they were an obstacle to getting things done and they were replaced by the respective subordinate offices of the Economic Council.)

The first session of the steering committee discussed wages, work performance and unemployment insurance. Eugene Varga urged that a permanent body to oversee wages be set up within the framework of the Economic Council in order that discrepancies might be cleared up and a uniform ordering of wages be arranged. He also recommended that the leader of this be appointed by the Trade Union Council, together with that five-to-seven-member committee which was in charge of supervising the work of this body. The steering committee accepted these suggestions in principle, adding a rider to the effect that, whenever necessary, the opinions of the delegates of the rural based trade unions be also polled.

There was considerably more debate around the motion on setting minimum work norms and on the improvement of labour discipline. After the declaration of the Republic of Councils, there was a general abolition of wages being paid according to production results in industry and in the course of the April wage reviews wages were significantly increased. However, as Varga had noted there was not only a lack of increase in production, but also an inevitable decline during the initial phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The reasons for this, as he stated, were as follows: the termination of the forced discipline characteristic of capitalist enterprises (and which can be replaced by the new, voluntary sort of labour discipline only after a period of time); the political movements that accompany a revolution; the drafting of large numbers of workers into the armed forces; and the effects of an imperialist blockade.

However, it was also natural that the consolidation of production should be got under way without delay. Those participating in the debate were in general agreement on the need to set production norms, with only János Vanczák being opposed on the grounds that the trade unions could not accept to do the work of the capitalist, that is, set minimum production goals. Vanczák's position was particularly and vigorously opposed by the old, left-leaning social-democrat leader, Dezső Bokányi, who pointed out that the unions were involved in governing a nation with all the responsibilities that entailed. He said that it could

not be emphasized often enough that the trade union had become a ruling, governing body which had to waken to the full realization of that.

In the course of the debate it was also brought up that the plant workers' councils and the production supervisors were not functioning properly, that they were too dependent on the collective of the plant and were therefore incapable of synthesizing local and general interests.

After lengthy debate, the steering committee of the Economic Council decided unanimously to instruct the plant workers' councils to the effect that whenever production had dropped since March 21st, minimum production norms would have to be set. The resolution called upon the trade unions to assist the plant workers' councils and the production supervisors in this endeavour and to delegate people into the larger plants' workers' councils in order to supervise production. The trade union delegate "will represent the collective interests of the proletariat even if it means opposing the specific interests of the workers of any one given plant".[15]

The third item on the agenda concerned the reform of the state assistance extended to the unemployed; it was decided that the eligible unemployed should sign up for the army and the new government should urge the transfer of manpower into those industrial sectors where there was a shortage. They adopted a resolution to set up an agency to deal with this problem, that is, to even out the discrepancies between the supply and demand of manpower. On Eugene Varga's recommendation, this so-called Labor Distribution Office was directed by someone from the Trade Union Council together with a committee delegated by the unions.

Reviewing the first meeting of the steering committee, the President of the Economic Council stated in the June 3, 1919 issue of *Népszava* that the Governing Council "had definitely erred in not establishing this organization earlier because already at the very first meeting it had become obvious just how many good pointers could be gained, concerning the organization of production and in general about the conduct of the economic affairs of the nation, from the leaders of the trade unions, the experienced combatants of the Hungarian proletarian movement". Varga's article was tendentious as he sought to assuage the trade-union opposition with words of approval since the party congress was just coming up. Nevertheless, if he looked back on that first meeting of the steering committee, he must have indeed been satisfied with it. Despite all the debates, the great majority of the union leaders supported the political line as outlined by Kun and Varga and they were ready to participate and exercise their responsibility in the work of organizing the economy.

During the next two months, the tasks of giving the economy proper direction mainly consisted in putting into practice the suggestions put forward at the first session of the steering committee. Although shortly after that meeting Varga

[15] Quoted from Varga's speech at the National Congress of Councils by Gyula Hevesi in his *Szociális termelés*, Budapest, 1959, p. 75.

wrote that the role of the trade unions, as a factor in directing the economy, was only in an embryonic stage and their influence was only made felt through the Economic Council[16], concrete necessity forced the development of diverse forms of direction and supervision during the short time that was still left

The trade unions were by no means restricted in their activity to these centrally assigned tasks. The Federation of Construction Workers initiated the foundation of the Directorate for Construction, which was to be in charge of the whole of the nation's construction industry. The section of architects suggested to the leadership of the Federation that a body be established having the necessary scope of authority to act as a general government planning institute embracing every aspect of the construction industry. This body was given the task of setting the sites and plans of the most urgent and most important construction projects, of deciding what was to be started first and allocating the necessary materials, manpower, assistance from other government departments, etc. As for the outcome of this suggestion, the only thing we know is that the leadership sought to consult the respective No. 8 department of the Economic Council before coming to any final decisions and thus hardly anything could be done about getting the thing under way before August. However, the fact that such a suggestion was made and accepted is in itself worthy of note.

At the National Congress of Councils, Gyula Hevesi sought to have the unions' scope of authority expanded when it came to directing certain factories. He recommended that the production supervisory bodies would be no longer responsible to the government but to the unions and that their responsibility should be the maintenance of labour discipline. The actual technical running of affairs should be up to a technical expert who would be responsible to the appropriate government body. In order that the plant workers' council could also have a hand in controlling the technical end of things, Hevesi also suggested that the members of that council should be given the necessary training in special classes.

The decree on the necessary reforms of the workers' councils only appeared on the 9th of July. (Its main points were that their members were to be elected every six months, were subject to immediate recall, the elections had to take place in the presence of the unions' representatives, and that, taking turns, only one person at a time could be withdrawn from production for carrying out administrative tasks.) In the spirit of the decree and for the supervision of the production and labour discipline of the plants, the unions set up committees which notified the workers' council of the plant in question and the Economic Council, which then proceeded to act on the matter brought to their attention. However, in actual practice things turned out somewhat differently from what the decree projected. The so-called "flying" squads of the unions had already come into being in June and acted on their own where the situation called for immediate decisions.

At the June 26, 1919 central leadership meeting of the Leather Workers'

[16] Jenő (Eugene) Varga: *Munkásigazgatás* (Workers' management), Budapest, 1919, p. 16.

Union, the secretary said that at the membership meeting of the Vác local (a town near the capital – Ed.) the shoe factory's workers' council had been established and the respective authority of the person supervising production and the one running the plant had been defined. The secretary also added that at the shoe factory of Kelenföld, then the largest one in the country, the workers' council had been set up, or rather, revived and he also gave the name of the person entrusted with the manager's duties.

At the July 2, 1919 central leadership meeting of the Glass Workers' Union, visits to two rural glass factories were reported on. In Salgótarján (Northern Hungary – Ed.) they had found the factory council's work unsatisfactory and had suggested that the council perhaps ought to be replaced. The speaker noted the improvement that had taken place after that warning, but added that they should by all means delegate someone to go there to keep order. It was decided that the above-mentioned "flying" squads would visit every glass factory.

In June 1919, new tasks were given to the trade unions. The nationalization of the factories of Borsod county and eastern and central Slovakia and the renewal of production were placed in the charge of the unions by the government, as we learn from the relatively intact files of the Glass Workers' Union.

The merging of similar types of plants was dictated not only by the fact that it was a financially sound move, but also, in fact primarily, by shortages in raw materials and energy supplies. This undertaking got actually under way only during the last days of the Republic of Councils, so we know relatively little about it. The organizing committee of the iron- and metalworkers debated at their July 25, 1919 meeting the various new tasks that arose out of the merger of the capital's foundries, taking as their starting point the report by one of the members who probably participated in that work. It is characteristic of those times that in the wake of the merger it was the union that decided about unavoidable dismissals and only afterwards did it turn to the Economic Council for ratification.

The hardest task of all that had been newly given to the unions was the tightening up of labour discipline, resorting to the use of even administrative means where circumstances so dictated. The leaders of the Governing Council and the president of the Economic Council had repeatedly made it quite clear that this was obviously the responsibility of the unions. Nevertheless, this was definitely the greatest issue of contention, and the resistance of not only a significant portion of the organized workers but also that of certain trade-union leaders had to be overcome. This was in a sense the greatest novelty introduced into the unions' sphere of responsibilities; however, only 'in a sense' because, as Varga had so rightly pointed out in the June 20th issue of the *Vas- és Fémmunkások Lapja,* the unions had already been involved in this sort of activity under capitalism, as many of the collective agreements called for the unions to ensure a certain degree of labour discipline.

The June 11, 1919 meeting of the steering committee of the Economic Council had in principle agreed that the strengthening of labour discipline was part of the unions' responsibility, but no concrete measures were adopted. The viewpoint of

those opposed to the bringing of concrete measures was reflected in the unsigned editorial published in the July 4, 1919 issue of the *Vas- és Fémmunkások Lapja* (most probably authored by János Vanczák). This was the only article that had an oppositionist tone – considerably more moderate than anything previously published – to appear in a trade journal since the formation of the Economic Council. Its author had the view that labour discipline was "primarily a question of consciousness rather than the kind of disciplinary measures of which we had plenty under capitalism. And as far as the trade unions are concerned, they ought not to be charged with tasks which contradict their hitherto educational endeavours".

The majority of the trade-union leaders did not, however, share these views and this was evident not only from the above-mentioned decision of the Economic Council. The organizing committee of the bookbinders called a meeting of the capital's bookbinders for July 3, 1919. Aside from the usual political report, the question of labour discipline was also on the agenda. To quote from the flyer announcing the meeting: "We must throw all of our energies into the tasks of construction and production. The only way that we can build the new world of socialism is if everyone contributes to the best of his ability and lives up to his responsibilities!" At the July 26th general meeting of the chemical industry workers (which was referred to as the meeting of the national council of the trade), the secretary's report – as we are told by the August 1, 1919 issue of the *Vegyipari Munkás* (Chemical worker) – called upon the delegates to "mercilessly sweep out of the way those who, either out of ignorance or out of malice, impede the flow of production". The planned new organizational by-law of the printers' union, which they wanted to bring before their congress (to be held in August 1919) was published in the August 1st issue of *Typographia*; the draft wanted to make the strengthening of labour discipline a part of the unions' responsibility and to define the plant workers' councils' scope of authority in carrying out disciplinary actions.

The official settling of the matter was signified by the No. 90 Decree of the Economic Council, dated July 19, 1919. According to it, the disciplinary committee, set up from among the members of the supervisory workers' council, could proceed according to the following seven steps in the case of a breach of labour discipline: public verbal reprimand, public written censure (on the bulletin board), transfer, wage cuts, immediate dismissal, a ban on being allowed to work in a socialized factory for a certain period of time, and a proposal aimed at expulsion from the union.

In the case of more severe disciplinary actions, the accused party concerned had the right of appeal to a labour court, which after April 1919 was made up of union delegates exclusively. As a by-product of socialization, the role of the employers' representatives among the judges was liquidated, but they were not replaced by anyone representing the state in its capacity as the new employer. For the conduct of disciplinary cases a special section was set up in addition to the labour courts. The chief personnel of that section were appointed by the

Economic Council which solicited the recommendations of the unions. Their judgement, which could be made even more severe by barring those found guilty from getting unemployment assistance, had the force of law and could not be appealed.[17]

An even more complicated problem was the reintroduction of a wage structure determined on the basis of actual production since the abolition of that system had just been won around the time of the March revolution after decades of struggle in which during the close of 1918 and the beginning of 1919 it was the communists who were in the vanguard. This problem was among those debated at the first meeting of the steering committee of the Economic Council. János Vanczák, representing the largest trade union, the Iron and Metal Workers' Federation, rejected the idea of returning to such a system. The previously mentioned July 4th article of the Federation's paper emphasized that the only way to bring about an increase in the level of productivity was "through the education of the workers and by providing them with a decent livelihood and not by capitalist production methods, not by a pay-by-achievement system, not through rewards and other, so-called scientific methods of work, serving capitalist interests". However, regardless of the spiritedness of the article in expressing the opinion of certain sections of the working class, it failed to answer, indeed, it could not answer the question that if production was on the decline how the workers' needs could be met to an anywhere near adequate degree. Many workers' collectives of factories, trades and industrial branches judged this problem differently; it was clear to them that production had to be increased before there could be any talk of meeting needs. In addition to education and discipline, they saw the system of wages by achievement as the best way of ensuring the growth of production. Recognizing this, the workers of the brick factory, with the accord of their union, decided in favour of the reintroduction of this system in July 1919, that is, before any concrete measures were adopted higher up. They were joined by the turners of the capital and the workers of the Manfred Weiss factory in Csepel and the aeronautics plant of Albertfalva.

To further refute Vanczák, we can also mention that it was precisely some long-time leaders of the unions who had, within their respective trades, argued in favour of returning to the system of "to each according to his work". The president of the stonecutters belonging to the Federation of Construction Workers had signalled for such a return already at the end of May 1919. This move was matched by the president and the secretary of the organizing committee of the metal founders of the Iron and Metal Workers' Federation during early July.

A decision in principle was taken at the July 7th session of the steering committee of the Economic Council concerning this question. The decision was unanimous after lengthy debate. Even the *Vas- és Fémmunkások Lapja* was influenced by these debates and in its July 19, 1919 issue it came out in favour of

[17] Cf. Gy. Hevesi: Op. cit., p. 223.

adopting a system of piece wages and material incentives instead of the simple time scale in order to increase productivity, that is, in the interest of the working class and the proletarian state.

The various details of the decree were being worked out during the month of July, but we know from various sources that a general increase in the level of production had already begun before any measures in line with the above were put into effect.[18] This was indicative of the workers' rising consciousness and sense of responsibility as well as the effectiveness of the then on-going system in which the trade unions had so significant a role. And what is more, their responsibilities were even further increased in the course of the month of July as far as guiding the national economy was concerned. The Agricultural Council and the Supreme Technological Council were established, both of which included trade-union representatives; however, both of these institutions only got as far as being formally constituted, the exercise of their intended function having been prevented by the overthrow of the dictatorship of the proletariat.[19]

IN DEFENSE OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

As we look at the 133 days of the Hungarian Republic of Councils, we see many instances of the trade unions taking an active part in the affairs of the state outside of the field of the national economy.

Here the primary involvement that we can point to is their role in the organization of the armed forces. The former system of draft had fallen apart following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, with the arrival of the bourgeois democratic revolution and with the secession of certain national minority areas. In the whole of Hungary only the papers of the headquarters of the Fourth Army had remained more or less intact. But this only affected the area between the Danube and the Tisza and that between the Danube and Lake Balaton. Furthermore, it is quite obvious that the outdated mobilization apparatus, based on the principle of general conscription, was not exactly in keeping with the times. Slightly exaggerating, but not without foundation, we can say that aside from the Fourth Army only two other organizations could be taken seriously regarding the organization of an army on account of their having fairly precise data on their members or clients, namely: the offices in charge of distributing the food ration cards and the trade unions. However, the latter were more suitable for carrying out military tasks partly on account of their decades-long experience in mobilizing large numbers of people and partly because, in addition to reliable membership lists, they also had the means of

[18] Regarding this, see Eugene [Jenő] Varga: *A Magyar Tanácsköztársaság gazdasági szervezete* (The economic organization of the Hungarian Republic of Councils), Moscow, 1920, p. 18; B. Kun: Op. cit., p. 81; and Gy. Hevesi: Op. cit., pp. 191–192.

[19] J. Varga: Op. cit., p. 14.

maintaining and enforcing organizational discipline at their disposal. Their possible military role had already been considered at the time of the bourgeois democratic revolution. At that time a plan had been drawn up for the organization of a "trade-union" army – one which would have been reliable from the point of view of the Social Democratic Party – to replace the old army which was already in a state of collapse. The March 25, 1919 decree of the Republic of Councils concerning the organization of a Red Army contained several of the points of the 1918 social-democrat plan such as, for example, that acceptance into the force would be conditional on the applicant's being recommended by his union. Following the commencement, on April 16th, of the armed intervention aimed at overthrowing the Republic of Councils and after the general collapse of the front, it seemed like the natural thing to do on the part of the government to entrust the immediate mobilization of the workers of the capital and its surrounding communities to the trade unions. The organization of an army started right away and after the 20th of April the daily press reported each day on the meetings and decisions of the various trades which announced their entry into the armed forces one after the other. This went on until the 25th of that month, when – likely as a by-product of the barely dormant workers' council versus trade-union rivalry – the Commissariat of War issued a decree stating that entry into the armed forces was only possible through the registration committees set up in the district councils. However, the times were hardly conducive to the trying out of new organizational forms. During the crisis days of early May, when the existence of the new state depended upon the speed with which newly armed workers from the capital could get to the front, the Governing Council had once again assigned the task of mobilization to the trade unions. This decision was also influenced by the conduct of the union leaders at the meeting of the Governing Council on May 2nd, i. e., at the height of the crisis. At that meeting the majority of the social-democratic commissars demanded the resignation of the government. The communists were in favour of continuing the struggle and urged that in such crucial decisions the opinions of the various other forums of the working class (e. g., the Budapest Labour Council, the shop steward collectives of the large unions, etc.) should also be solicited. To the surprise of those present, Károly Peyer and Ferenc Miákits, two union leaders noted for their rightist views, supported the communists and this decided the debate in the latter's favour.[20] The attitude of these two union leaders was rather strange precisely because we now know from various sources that they were members of the group of union leaders who had lost all confidence following the military setbacks of April and had begun to speculate concerning the overthrow of the Republic of Councils. The only way that we can explain their stand is by surmising that they must have judged the situation to have been so bleak that they even ruled out a return to bourgeois

[20] On the role of the trade-union leader in the army, see the article by Jenő Landler, titled "A Vörös Hadsereg diadalmas útja és bomlása" (The rise and fall of the Red Army). Published in *Új Március* (New March) (Vienna), Nos. 3–4, 1926.

democratic norms unless the foreign intervention was beaten back. They had correctly seen that the resignation of the government at that particular time would have been tantamount to total capitulation, that is, the victory of the counter-revolution. This was something they did not want either and therefore they had no choice but to be in favour of going on with the struggle. Finally, it was the reaction and attitude of the capital's workers that had exercised the greatest influence over the decision of the various forums speaking out in favour of continued armed resistance. Within a matter of days tens of thousands joined the Red Army, thereby not only turning the tide in what seemed a hopeless situation, but also creating a solid base for an offensive. This significant turn in events was considered by the young government to be the "birthday" of the new army.

All this clearly indicates that the organized Hungarian working masses conducted themselves in a worthy manner in defending the proletarian homeland and that the trade unions had utilized well their rich store of experience in the organization and mobilization of workers. The first Hungarian people's power could only be defeated by vastly superior external military forces.

In conclusion, two essential circumstances must be referred to:

One is that the trade-union opposition which quieted down and was made to quiet down during the beginning of June was no longer a factor as a movement after that period, although the internal and external situation of the Republic of Councils remained difficult.

The iron workers' shop stewards whose meetings were the scenes of the most ferocious debates during early June, where statements that could easily have been branded as counter-revolutionary incitement were made, decided on July 21, 1919 to be even more firm in carrying out the dictatorship of the proletariat and notified the Governing Council to that effect. Opposition of any note could only be detected among the printers, the left-wing leaders of which were busy with affairs of state, while the shortage of paper and the closure of several papers caused job insecurity on the part of the workers.

The second point worthy of note is that the system worked out for the guidance of the economy in June continued to function right to the very end, taking no notice of the tragic events unfolding at the front and in the rear areas. For example, the Scientific Technological Council had its founding session during the last days of July (with the participation of several eminent non-Marxist experts), and the organizing committee of the iron and metal founders discussed the merger of factories as if its decisions would influence events for the course of decades. The din of battle could be practically heard in the capital when the chemical industry's workers held their general meeting, where they discussed the accomplishments and future tasks of the union in economic management. Miklós Cservenka, the man responsible for production in one of the largest factories of the country, the MÁV Machine Works, who himself was a long-time union leader delegated to that post by the Iron and Metal Workers' Federation and who was sure to have known exactly just what was going on, was on the job even as late as

July 31st, making decision on key and sensitive political issues. The collective of chief trade-union shop stewards of the Lágymányos Tobacco Factory brought down a decision on the tightening of labour discipline on August 1st no less. The chief shop steward went around the plant to announce the already familiar sanctions awaiting those breaking the rules, and potential thieves – the shortage of cigarettes was very great at the time – were threatened with being put before a revolutionary court of law.

From the above it seems as if the debates and the struggles were not in vain. The Republic of Councils had developed the forms of a viable path for the involvement of the trade unions within the framework of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Furthermore, these were forms which justified hope for future development. Although the counter-revolution destroyed these forms in their still embryonic stage, nevertheless, their coming about and initial experiences might still provide lessons for the present.

THE TRADE-UNION POLITICS OF THE HUNGARIAN PARTY OF COMMUNISTS (AUGUST 1919 – OCTOBER 1944)

by
Kálmán Szakács

Following the overthrow of the Republic of Councils, the party of the working class, which was organizationally united but contained major contradictions politically and ideologically, disintegrated into its constitutive elements. After a brief period of having been the ruling class and the leader of the nation, the working class had once again become a persecuted class, with all of the fury of the counter-revolution being vented upon it. During the two years of the raging white terror, over 5,000 people were murdered and 70,000 were imprisoned or placed in internment camps. Approximately 100,000 communists, socialists and other progressives were forced into emigration. Although the Entente powers, in their talks with right-wing Hungarian social democrats in July 1919, had promised that the labour organizations would be allowed to function legally after the overthrow of the Republic of Councils, the functioning of these organizations was everywhere interrupted during the period of the white terror.

In accord with the occupying Romanian military authorities, at the end of August the government permitted the trade unions to resume activities in the capital, providing that they abstained from politics. However, in September a fresh attack was launched against the unions. Their offices, meeting and recreation halls were taken over and in the case of certain trades, all their properties were confiscated and everything was turned over to counter-revolutionary organizations. The "irresponsible" bloodshedding by armed counter-revolutionary groups made up of officers was accompanied by terror and conducted by official government bodies. The communist movement was outlawed, that is, forced into illegality. The social democrats were allowed to remain a legal organization, but its sphere of activity was restricted to a minimum. The extreme right of the counter-revolution wanted to make the entire socialist labour movement illegal and to liquidate it. Official government circles and the various right-wing social organizations all supported the Christian-socialist unions, trying to break up the socialist labour movement and to win the workers over to the counter-revolutionary side. At the end of 1919 and the beginning of 1920 those counter-revolutionary groups came increasingly into the fore – with the tacit approval of the Entente – which sought to consolidate the counter-revolution by the total repression of the working class and the outlawing of its organizations, including the trade unions.

In December 1919, the Hungarian Party of Communists issued the following call to the workers in the first leaflet it put out since the overthrow of the Republic of Councils: "Defend the unions and their unity". This expressed the essence of the defeated party's union politics during those extremely difficult times, that is, that the unions had to be defended in face of the counter-revolutionary offensive, that every means had to be employed to ensure their survival, and that these socialist organizations with their great history had to be strengthened in face of the newly formed, or just being formed, right-wing and fascist labour organizations.

The efforts of the communists were made considerably more difficult by the fact that many of them and the left-wing trade-union leaders active at the time of the Republic of Councils were under arrest or already murdered. Furthermore, the right-wing leadership of the reorganized Social Democratic Party of Hungary endeavoured to keep communist and other leftist elements away from the labour organizations.

In many of the trades, the leadership of the unions had been left in the hands of right-wing social democrats during the Republic of Councils. After its defeat, the reorganization and leadership of the unions were in the hands of these same elements. The politics of the leaders of the reorganized Social Democratic Party of Hungary and of the Trade Union Council in the autumn of 1919 had proved beyond any doubt that the new leadership was considerably to the right and that the line favouring political cooperation with the counter-revolutionary regime in the name of some *Realpolitik* had become more accepted. On the 17th of August, the pro tem party leadership and the Trade Union Council issued a joint call to the organized workers of Budapest. In it they sought to rationalize their involvement in the Republic of Councils, emphasizing that they had never agreed with the dictatorship which had only brought the workers "to ruin".

Despite such activities, the communists fought to strengthen and to defend the legality of the social-democrat led trade unions, as it was their considered opinion that this line of action served the interests of the working class. Regardless of the right-wing politics of some of the leaders, the unions were nevertheless socialist organizations and their programs contained the principles of the class struggle. It must be added that their actual practice was often in contradiction with their stated principles and the reorganizing Hungarian Party of Communists endeavoured to make this contradiction clear before the working masses, thereby getting the unions' rank and file to oppose the right-wing leadership.

There were two main reasons why the Hungarian Party of Communists considered the defense of the unions and involvement within them paramount:

a. Being involved in the work and the life of the trade unions meant for the outlawed Hungarian Party of Communists a chance to be in direct contact with organized and unorganized workers, within a legal framework.

b. The Hungarian trade-union movement had never been apolitical. It was closely linked to the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, and this fact made the unions a political organ and therefore a political factor. The members of the

unions were interested in politics and receptive to socialist ideas. This was the reason for the fact that not even during the height of the white terror could the counter-revolution manage to get organized workers to leave the socialist organizations in any great numbers to join the Christian-socialist unions. Nor could they mislead the working masses with various "patriotic" slogans.

At the end of 1919, there were 215,000 workers in the social-democratic trade unions. In 1917 the number of organized workers was the same, indicating that despite all adverse circumstances the industrial working class had stuck it out with the socialist unions.

Recognizing this fact, the Hungarian Party of Communists drew the political conclusion that the overwhelming majority of the organized workers sincerely adhered to socialist ideas and if their leaders did not act accordingly then conflict between themselves and the workers would be inevitable. In other words, the trade unions had the potential of becoming revolutionized and were therefore key target areas for communists.

This notion concerning the revolutionizing of the trade unions, and thereby winning them over, was tied in with the Hungarian Party of Communists' main political goals. It was an organic part of the struggle to bring about a new revolution and the second Republic of Councils.

The necessary conditions for the winning over of the unions were simply not present. This goal was not seen as something to be realized immediately, but rather as a long-term project. The primary aim of the Hungarian Party of Communists was to have unity brought about in the ranks of the workers in order to withstand the offensive of the bourgeoisie. As the April 22, 1922 issue of *Röpirat* (Leaflet), put out by the communists, stated: "At this date we can only speak of attaining certain short-term goals, such as the right of assembly, freedom of the press, amnesty, cessation of detentions, and more bread, but not of the seizure of political power...".

The communists valued the unions greatly on two counts: as a socialist organization protecting the workers' interests and as the legal cover for the outlawed Hungarian Party of Communists. During the twenty-five years of the counter-revolutionary regime's existence, the unions were the most important areas for the communists' political and organizational involvement. Party members were instructed to enter the unions and to establish cells, through which to work toward the revolutionizing of the unions. At the same time, they were also expected to deal with day to day political problems, to fight for political freedom, total amnesty and better wages and to take the leadership to task for their passive compliance with the bosses on the economic front.

To put it differently, the Hungarian Party of Communists sought to defeat the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the social-democratic leaders of the unions, while it tried to convince the rank and file of these bodies of the correctness of its line in order to bring about the revolutionary unity of the trade unions. However, the dialectical interrelationship of this two-front struggle was not clarified in all its aspects and ramifications, and therefore the ways and means

as to how to wage this struggle was even less clearly grasped. Due to this, the communists sometimes failed to differentiate between the social democrats' centre and their right wings, or between the various leaders. Nevertheless, during the early twenties, unlike in the later period, the communists did not launch general, across-the-board attacks on the union leaders, but only as regards the right wing and the reformists. During the early twenties, the Hungarian Party of Communists was in favour of union solidarity and opposed any move that would split them up. This did not mean, however, unity at all cost or with just anyone, but only on the basis of the class struggle, the product of which would have to be a firmly united and class-conscious trade-union movement.

The Hungarian Party of Communists wanted to achieve the winning over of the unions by introducing new, left-wing elements into them, by stepping up the union involvement of the communists, by recruiting workers who had been in organized labour for a long time and who were known to be socialists (mainly by way of supporting their demands), and by exposing the compromising and treacherous politics of the leaders. By demanding the broadening of union democracy it sought to inject some life into the unions, figuring that the right wing would be dismissed from the leadership in a democratic election and be replaced by leftist and communist leaders. According to that line of thought, in the course of the struggle the unions would be transformed into militant socialist organizations.

In line with this, the task of the communists active in the unions was to support and strengthen the left wing in the unions, to organize them to defeat the right-wing leaders, and to win positions of power with the help of the membership.

The soundness of this plan was supported by the fact that, from the end of 1922, communist and other leftist, progressive people had got into the leadership of several trade organizations. The thrust and growing strength of the left wing was already obvious during the 7th Congress of the Trade Unions and at the National Conference of Trade Unions a year later, in March 1924. The contradictions were becoming acute between the union rank and file and the rightist leaders.

The Hungarian Party of Communists was in touch with those social-democrat functionaries, either in the party or in the unions, who were known leftists and close to the communists and those who opposed the right-wing leaders. It also endeavoured to get the centrist and leftist leaders to oppose the right wing. In 1922 it offered to cooperate with the centrists in emigration, in order to isolate and defeat the right-wing leaders who had come to terms with the Horthy regime. These centrists had fundamental differences with Peyer's leadership, but since they too had shied away from the more militant expressions of the class struggle and feared a growing communist influence, the cooperation between them and the communists was quickly reduced to a minimum.

After 1922, when the Social Democratic Party of Hungary became a parliamentary party, the contradiction between the trade-union leadership and the members further increased. Some of the union bosses themselves became

Members of Parliament and they considered parliamentary games to be more important than anything else. The fact that often the same person held leading posts in both the party and the union, made its negative effect felt even more markedly. This circumstance was objectively favouring the communists' revolutionary aims in the unions. However, the communists' plan for winning over the unions, based on the earlier mentioned "defeat and convince" line, necessarily narrowed the numbers of those fighting for unity. There were many workers who were against the politics of the right-wing leaders, but were nevertheless emotionally tied to the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and hence the unions led by it. These workers wanted to bring about changes in their party's and union's political line, wanting to give it a more thoroughgoing socialist content, but they did not accept the idea of exclusively communist leadership. They believed that unity could only be achieved through the political cooperation of the two labour parties (i. e. between the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the Hungarian Party of Communists). However, such cooperation was blocked not only by the strategic line of the communists and the trade-union tactics laid down by the Communist International, but also by the situation of the Hungarian social-democratic labour movement, namely, the solid position of the right wing within the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the unions and its rabid anti-communist platform as well as the theoretical uncertainty of many of those opposed to the social democrats.

The struggle for union unity on the part of the Hungarian Party of Communists took place under much more difficult circumstances in Hungary than was the case with several other European countries and their respective communist parties. There the existence of strong and legally sanctioned communist parties had, in certain cases, exercised a compelling effect on the social-democratic trade-union leaders and in numerous instances they made common cause with each other. In the case of Hungary, however, the right-wing leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the unions exploited the fact that the Hungarian Party of Communists was underground and organizationally weak; therefore they were reluctant to hold the demands of left-wing workers and neither did they particularly discriminate as to the methods they employed to break up any opposition.

The rightist social-democrat leadership, enjoying its legality, charged the communists with trying to break up the unity of the unions. But this alleged unity was by no means the real thing. There were many tendencies and lines represented within them. Furthermore, the communists' existence, involvement and possible say in the leadership of the unions had to be taken into account, despite the organizational weakness of the communist movement.

The growing strength of the trade-union opposition in 1923 indicated the increased influence of the communists in the unions. The unions which were led in the spirit of pact-politics[1] made it an ever more frequent practice to expel anyone

[1] See Péter Sipos's study in this volume.

in opposition. The struggle for their readmission revealed the growing influence of the communists as well as the lack of unity. The expulsions and the bosses' putting the breaks on the class struggle contributed to a lot of people dropping out of the unions, compounding the effects of the counter-revolutionary pressure. In 1923 total membership in the unions dropped to 176,000 from the previous year's total of 202,000.[2] This made the need to achieve unity even more urgent. The Hungarian Party of Communists was clear on this need, but as for the concrete steps toward its realization it was often in error, falling into the trap of wishful thinking.

THE 1st CONGRESS OF THE HUNGARIAN PARTY OF COMMUNISTS AND THE TRADE-UNION QUESTION

In April 1925, a new left-wing and militant legal labour party was formed under the direction of the Hungarian Party of Communists, called the Socialist Workers' Party of Hungary. The appearance of this party brought about a new situation in the Hungarian labour movement. The social democrats' monopoly on legality among the left of centre groups was ended for the time being. Two legal labour parties, although not on par with each other, were now active in Hungarian public life.

The 1st Congress of the Hungarian Party of Communists confirmed the above-outlined trade-union policy.[3] There was no change in the basic principles, but the Congress did work out and clarify important practical details and there was progress made on that front.

At the Congress, the speaker on the trade-union question was Jenő Landler. On the basis of his report, the Congress accepted a resolution emphasizing the need for union unity and confirming the communist plan for the "revolutionizing and taking over of the trade unions". There was, however, a lengthy debate which preceded the acceptance of that resolution.

Some of the speakers expressed the view that changes were needed in the party's hitherto union policy because the new revolutionary labour party, the Socialist Workers' Party of Hungary, could carry out the work of the communists in the unions. They felt that under these changed circumstances to go on with the old policy, that is, to defend the unity of the unions and to work towards their strengthening, meant, in effect, the strengthening of the social democrats and would hinder the growth of the new labour party. They felt that a complete break would ensue sooner or later and if this process had already been got underway

[2] *Szakszervezeti Ertesítő*, 1923, No. 6 and 1924, No. 6.

[3] The 1st Congress of the illegal Hungarian Party of Communists began on August 18, 1925 in Vienna. The four-day long Congress debated the international as well as the Hungarian political situation, the peasant question and the trade unions' activities. It adopted resolutions on the party's tasks and ratified the organizational by-laws of the party.

within the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, then it should be made total and extended to the trade unions as well. In their view, without an all-out attack on the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the trade unions and without getting the latter to break with the social democrats, neither a strong communist nor a strong legal labour party could be established.

The Congress did not accept this simplified view of how to go about getting a viable legal labour party and it came out in favour of defending the unity of the unions. The demand that members of the Socialist Workers' Party of Hungary should leave the unions was rejected. According to the position taken by the Congress, the key prerequisite of the struggle against the union bureaucracy was union unity and the reformist leaders would have to be attacked through unity within the membership and not by leaving the unions, launching attacks from outside. It was not the unions in general that had to be attacked, but the leaders who made deals with the bosses. In this spirit, the Congress called on the members of the Socialist Workers' Party of Hungary to support the unions and it flatly opposed all suggestions to the effect that this party should organize new trade unions.

Even before the trade-union opposition became a party (i.e. the Socialist Workers' Party of Hungary), it had had considerable influence in Budapest with the stonemasons, carpenters, shoemakers, precision instruments makers, iron turners, painters, bank clerks and the employees of private firms. The social-democrat union leaders had worked hard to purge this opposition from the unions well before the formation of the Socialist Workers' Party of Hungary and even more so afterwards. This is why the Hungarian Party of Communists voiced the demand at the Congress that people should be allowed membership in the unions regardless whether they were members of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary or other leftist parties. The Socialist Workers' Party of Hungary did not want to break up the unions, rather, it asked to be allowed to join and demanded that its members should not be discriminated against. This position taken by the Congress was politically correct and just, since one of the bases of the party was the union opposition.

This was a moderate demand on the part of the Hungarian Party of Communists which considered not only the existence of the two legal labour parties, but also the balance of force. Consequently, it did not call for the placing of the unions under joint leadership, despite the fact that in certain trades, where the left wing enjoyed strong support, such a demand would not have been without basis.

The communists had a clear understanding of the contradictions and the other negative effects which the close interrelationship between the unions and the Social Democratic Party of Hungary produced. But it could also see that this had a positive aspect as well concerning the union members who were involved, and receptive to politics and believed themselves to be socialists and militant organized workers, which most of them were. This made the work of the Hungarian Party of Communists considerably more easy. It sought to win not

only the conscious, militant elements and those who had quit or been expelled, but the whole of the membership. It did not want to see the minority which supported the Socialist Workers' Party of Hungary to be grouped in a new union because that would isolate the new party, as well as itself, from the masses of organized labour.

The resolution of the Congress clearly stated that as far as the Hungarian Party of Communists' trade-union activity was concerned, the communists had to strive to exploit the particular organizational structure of the unions in the interest of revolutionizing them. However, it was pointed out that the membership had to be helped to understand that, despite the opportunism of the union bosses, the unions should not be simply dismissed as being useless as far as the revolution was concerned. Were the contrary line to be followed, it would severely hamper the work of revolutionizing the unions and the winning of the masses.

Of course, the Congress had also dealt with the negative aspects of the relationship between the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the unions. Getting the unions to become independent of this party would have created a more favourable climate for the communists in terms of their endeavours on that front and therefore the Congress clearly stated that a struggle should be waged for the termination of the automatic links between the trade unions and the Social Democratic Party of Hungary.

The situation was complicated by the fact that the ruling classes too were interested in getting the unions to break away from the Social Democratic Party of Hungary in order to terminate the former's contact with the socialist movement and to make them apolitical organizations. The Hungarian Party of Communists was fully aware of the aims of the ruling classes and therefore this demand was stated in terms of a principle to keep in mind within a long-term perspective. The Congress was unequivocal on the point that the demand for a separation did not have to be interpreted as an agitational item, nor as a slogan, but great care had to be taken that the issue of the independence of the trade unions from the Social Democratic Party be clearly distinguished from the demand which called for the depoliticization of the unions, by which the government endeavoured to place the unions on a "national basis". The Congress stated its disapproval of any slogan which would call on the members of the unions to reject their collective membership in the Social Democratic Party and to deny the payment of party dues. However, the Congress did not pass in silence over the fact that the mechanistic relationship between the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the unions was one of the causes of the growing depopulation of the latter.

During the first five years of the 1920's, the Hungarian working class fought an alternately defensive and offensive battle with the ruling classes. In the first few months it was simply for the legality of the unions and against the atrocities of the white terror. By 1921 and after, in response to the growing economic offensive of the capitalists, it went on the counter-offensive and won pay increase in certain trades. A series of strikes occurred in 1922. The reorganization of the nation's financial structure in 1924 resulted in growing unemployment, the situation of the

industrial workers deteriorated and strikes were increasing. These struggles contributed to the development of the workers' consciousness and to the growing opposition within the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. The union bosses had made no secret of the fact that they regarded the weapon of the strike something to be used only as a last resort, which they would rather not have to resort to, and this had further increased the workers' lack of confidence in the unions. By the end of 1924 and early 1925 union membership had decreased from the previous year's total of 176,000 to 127,000.[4] Many long-time members had left the unions, and leftist and other workers who had criticized the reformist leadership were expelled, as were organizations which had dared to speak out. A new development after 1924 was the drive for autonomy whereby certain organizations broke off relations with the Trade Union Council and became autonomous.

Accompanying the series of expulsions, resignations and breakaways, there was danger that the union bosses would exploit the absence of the militants and turn the unions into organizations of even greater class-collaboration and into servile tools for their own political ends. Union unity was in jeopardy.

Despite this situation the Communist Party went along with the principles laid down in 1922 at the 4th Congress of the Communist International, which stated that regardless of the persecution suffered by the communists in the hands of the reformists, in any country, the unity of the unions had to be preserved. "The reformists resort to expulsion in order to provoke splits. By systematically driving the best elements out of the unions, they hope that the communists will lose their heads, leave the unions ... Communists must prevent the splitting of the unions with all the means at their disposal, with all the strength of their organization; they must check the criminal frivolity with which the reformists are breaking up trade union unity."[5]

The Hungarian Party of Communists had called upon those who had resigned to return to their respective unions, intending by this to stem the outflow of members and hoping to shore up politically the unions with the return of left-wing workers. This was also in line with the principles of the above-mentioned 4th Congress, according to which "Communists must conduct from within the trade unions an energetic struggle against ... attempt(s) under the flag of autonomy, ... to split the workers' movement into sections at war with each other ..."[6]

In addition to clear breakaways and leaving the Trade Union Council, there were other ways too in which autonomist trends were manifested. The moderate autonomists only called for decentralization, that is, they only wanted greater autonomy for the various trades within the industrial branch federations in their dealings with the central leadership, as well as for certain unions vis à vis the Trade Union Council. The decentralization was to entail greater self-government

[4] *Szakszervezeti Értesítő*, 1925, No. 6.

[5] *The Communist International 1919–1943. Documents.* Selected and edited by Jane Degras. Volume I. 1919–1922. Oxford University Press, London, 1956, pp. 413–414.

[6] Ibid., p. 412.

on the part of the trade organization, which would have meant control of the so-called "resistance fund", the right to decide concerning strikes and so on. Although these were positive things, such a move would have increased the division among the trades, that is, between any one given trade and its related trades and would have made it more difficult to organize unified, joint and militant actions, requiring large numbers of people.

Knowing this, the communists also opposed the call for decentralization, trying, instead, to get the quitters and breakaways to rejoin. Those under the influence of the Socialist Workers' Party of Hungary or the Hungarian Party of Communists did return to the unions, but in most instances the campaign met with defeat, owing to the weakness of the party. The Hungarian Party of Communists did not want to get those who had left to return individually, but rather as a group, thereby to reinforce the leftist faction. If it could not prevent breakaways, it established groups among the workers of the respective trades who had left to prepare for the eventual rejoining and in order to keep up the fight against the right wing of the unions. Together with them, it organized movements for higher wages, in which it involved both organized and unorganized workers. It tried to contain internal conflicts, which only harmed the interests of the workers, while also seeking for ways to strengthen cooperation between the workers and to heighten their feeling of solidarity.

"LEFT-WING COMMUNISM" AND TRADE-UNION POLITICS

The communists' trade-union politics remained unchanged after 1925 but the circumstances within which it tried to realize its aims continued to be difficult. There was a decline in the party's organizational strength as a result of the wave of arrests and its influence among the workers of large industries remained weak. It was incapable of preventing the weakening of the unions that was taking place as a result of the expulsions and resignations. This weakening was very much related to the slackening of the strike movement and to the fact that the government initiated a well-publicized offensive against them.

Emboldened by its success in the 1926 elections, early in 1927 the Bethlen government made public its plan for the takeover of the unions. That announcement, however, only succeeded in rousing the workers' resistance. "There is no question facing the Hungarian working class more important today than that of the freedom of the trade unions, and the Communist Party has no task more serious than the organization and leadership of the struggle to stem this offensive of the government that is threatening the freedom of the unions," stated *Új Március,* the theoretical journal of the Hungarian Party of Communists, in its March 1927 edition. Not only the communists but the unions and the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary also opposed the Bethlen plan. Nevertheless, the communists still believed that the rightist leaders of the unions played right into Bethlen's hands with their hitherto political line and practice.

This opinion of the Hungarian Party of Communists was further confirmed when they saw that instead of organizing the workers to resist the Bethlen plan, the reformist leadership continued to tone down the class struggle, hoping in this way to convince the government that there was really no need to go ahead with the proposed takeover. This was coupled with a stepped-up persecution of communist trade-union members. Given this background, we can see that it was not without reason that the Hungarian communists began to refer to the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the union leaders as "social fascists". This very serious and at the same time false accusation levelled against the social-democratic leaders had hurt the rank and file union members' sense of justice, although they themselves were dissatisfied with the reformists. The communists' criticism was basically valid and justified, but the way in which it was put forward, mixing principled criticism with personal attacks, had a clearly counter-productive effect.

Until 1926, the Hungarian Party of Communists had differentiated between the right wing of the social democrats and their centre. In 1927 it abandoned this stand, seeking to achieve unity exclusively from below and opposing not only the rightist leaders, but those in the middle and on the moderate left as well. At this time, its main target was the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the union leaders, and not the counter-revolutionary regime. In other words, the party's political line had shifted to the far left.

The 4th Congress of the Profintern (i.e. the "Red" Trade Unions' International) took place during March 1928. The main question under discussion was how the masses could be most rapidly won over to the "red" (i.e. those under communist leadership) trade unions and how the attacks of the reformist unions could be best countered.

Given the political behaviour of the social-democratic union leaders, their opposition to a united front and their tactics in the struggle for better wages, the Profintern concluded that in every country and in every trade, where the communist-led union opposition was influential, an independent, militant "red" trade union must be established and it adopted a resolution to that effect.

In his speech at the Congress, Béla Szántó criticized the Hungarian trade-union leaders, but expressed the opinion of the Hungarian Party of Communists to the effect that Hungarian conditions being what they were, it would be an error to strive to break the unity of the unions and that communists should continue to work within the reformist unions and try to bring the masses back into these organizations.

During the spring and summer of 1928, the Hungarian Party of Communists still was of the opinion that with the various union posts that it had already won and especially with the assistance of the leftist workers who supported the union opposition movement, it could effectively remove the right-wing leaders and take over the unions. It was in accordance with this line of thought that the July 1928 plenary of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Party of Communists decided on the tasks facing the party. At that time the communists still held the analysis that the situation of the Hungarian working class was different from that of

western countries where the revolutionary wing of the labour movement was allowed to operate openly and given this radical difference, it would not be correct to start "red" trade unions here. Such a move would contain the danger that the "red" unions and, together with them the Hungarian Party of Communists itself, could become isolated from the labour movement. The "red" unions could only operate underground, i.e., could only involve small numbers of people who would in all probability be members of the Hungarian Party of Communists anyway.

The plenary urged that greater efforts be exerted in the miners', the diggers' and agricultural workers', textile workers', and construction workers' unions. It called for greater militancy against scabbing and a strong stand against "union sectarianism and ultra-radicalism". Another item discussed was the formation of factory committees in line with the resolution of the 4th Profintern Congress. These committees were intended to be the militant, vanguard organs of the workers in the factories. However, there were those who favoured the setting up of the factory shop steward system instead. Knowing that the factory committees would be banned by the authorities, the plenary finally accepted the latter position. The shop steward system was meant to be the core of union unity because the stewards would be elected not only by the organized workers of the plant, but by every worker there.

Soon after the July plenary, a sharp debate broke out among the communists concerning trade-union politics and, contrary to the party position up to that time, the question of forming red unions arose once again. These polemics only ended a year later. Its conclusions were embodied in the resolutions of the 2nd Congress. Let us survey the course of this debate.

At the October 17th, 1928 meeting of the committee-in-exile[7] of the Hungarian Party of Communists several people, with Kun foremost among them, felt that "the 4th Congress [of the Profintern] was way over our heads". Others considered this to be an exaggeration and, instead, believed the error to have been that "we did not realize in time that the line adopted by the [4th] Congress also applied to us", and that "we failed to analyse the 4th Congress from the Hungarian point of view".[8] In other words, some leaders of the party did not consider, in the autumn of 1928, the error to have been the failure to establish red unions – as urged by the 4th Profintern Congress – but only that they had not analysed those resolutions of the Congress which applied to Hungarian conditions. The polemics indicated that a critical review of the communists' trade-union politics was under way within the Party and that a new line was in the making. In addition to the initiatives of the Profintern, this latter fact gained further confirmation in the new drives for higher wages, in the growing militancy of the workers and in the repeated instances of open conflict with union bosses

[7] This was one of the leading bodies of the Hungarian Party of Communists, which operated outside of Hungary, mainly either in Vienna or Berlin. During the 1920's it essentially had the role of the party's Central Committee.

[8] The Archives of the Institute of Party History, fond 500.

who tried to put the brakes on the workers' movement. The fact that the opposition within the unions was growing in strength also had a role in this process. In some of the trades, the opposition got into heavy conflict with the official leadership. For example, such was the case with the construction workers, the federation of which got into a financial crisis on account of the Foundation Stone Construction Industry Work and Production Cooperative, established in 1925, having gone bankrupt. The federation expelled the workers who opposed the leadership's policies. This was followed by the oppositionists among the locksmiths being expelled from the Federation of Iron Workers, which led to the situation whereby the locksmiths who were employed in factories, quit the Federation, like the iron turners who had done so earlier. Those workers of the leather industry who had turned in their memberships – and whom the communists tried to get back into the organization – joined the syndicalist General Labour Federation, in protest against the union leaders of the leather trade.

Some of the communist leaders assessed these developments as indicating a desire on the part of the workers for new organizational forms and, accordingly the committee-in-exile of the Hungarian Party of Communists suggested that a new look should be taken at the party's tactics. It posed the question whether "it is wise to keep to our hitherto tactics, the basis of which has been the winning over of the unions from within?"[9] With reference to the "Foundation Stone Scandal", this Committee stated that "to issue the slogan calling on the workers to join the unions would only bring about our total isolation from the masses".[10] But the situation in the Construction Workers' Federation was by no means typical and dropping out was not a general phenomenon. Although the communists' idea of winning the unions had only a propagandistic worth under the given circumstances, it was incorrect to conclude on the basis of the number of breakaways and drop-outs that new tactics had to be adopted.[11] Basically what happened was that the trade-union politics of the communists were brought into more of an alignment – without a proper analysis of the domestic situation – with the line of the Comintern and Profintern, which was shifting to the left. This was still not clearly announced at the close of 1928, in fact, as we know from the letters of the committee-in-exile of the Hungarian Party of Communists, it was strongly maintained that the change "does not mean that the Communist Party has abandoned the policy of unity on the entire union front in favour of a secessionist line".[12] In other words, it was not opposed, in principle, to splits as such; in fact it approved of such moves, while at the same time it did no endeavour to bring about such situations in every union.

[9] The Archives of the Institute of Party History, fond 500.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Although no exact figures are available, the number did not exeed 3–4 per cent of the total membership.

[12] Ibid.

The adoption of union splitting as a principle and the support given to separatist movements meant that the breakaway organizations had become important in the eyes of the Party which had stepped up its efforts to influence these organizations and to assume their leadership. At the end of 1928 and during early 1929, the Party's attitude towards the dissident organizations indicated that it regarded them as being, in a sense, the embryonic form and bases of its independent trade unions, or at least, they embodied such a potential. Indeed, the draft theses of the Central Committee did in fact state later that the split-off organizations were the seeds of a future "red" trade-union movement. For this reason, in those plants where it was likely that at least a part of the workers would join the breakaways, the organization of committees for unity was abandoned. On the other hand, elsewhere, where the above possibility was not present, they adopted the idea of organizing committees for unity, which replaced the earlier notion of "winning over the unions". The unity that these organizations aimed for did not include unity with the social-democratic unions; on the contrary, outside these unions and against them, they made efforts to unite and organize communists, opposition members, former members who had either been expelled or those who had quit, as well as unorganized workers. The organization of the opposition committees for unity were to have been merely a transitional step toward the establishment of an independent union movement.

By the end of 1928 the various leading organs of the Party had come to an agreement on the new trade-union line, but they still differed on the question of timing. However, unity was soon achieved on this detail as well, since the trade-union question was both directly and indirectly connected with the debate on the Party's general political line which ended with the conclusion that the Party's immediate strategic goal was a proletarian revolution and any deviance from this watchword was tantamount to opportunism.

This position taken by the Central Committee brought to an end the various views that had been evolved around the question of the realization of the new trade-union policy in terms of its timing. Having given up the plan of establishing the committees for unity, they accepted in March 1929 the suggestion of the Profintern concerning the organization of plant committees which would serve as the base for the new organizations.

In the second half of 1929 the Party turned its attention towards the plant organizations. By that time the principle of the necessity of forming "red" trade unions was accepted, but the means of bringing them about and the organizational form to be employed were not yet clear. For this reason, the emphasis was not on organizational forms, but on attracting the workers; the line was that the Hungarian Party of Communists and the working class, instead of the social-democratic trade unions, should lead the struggle against bureaucracy and for the improvement of the workers' lot.

The lack of detail in the discussion on what organizational form to adopt and the frequent changes in form and labelling all indicate various attempts, all unsuccessful, at resolving a certain contradiction: independent "red" (i.e.,

revolutionary) trade unions must be established, but legally, with a mass base, so as to function as a mass organization. This, of course, amounted to a sheer impossibility in Hungary with its counter-revolutionary regime.

The Hungarian Party of Communists sought to bring about unity with the Social Democratic Party of Hungary's rank and file from below, that is, excluding, moreover, even opposing, the leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the unions. So the efforts to establish new and revolutionary trade unions got under way. Thus, the turn in the Party's line on the trade unions had become complete by the end of 1929, with the left sectarian line becoming dominant.

TOWARDS RED UNIONS?

The 2nd Congress of the Hungarian Party of Communists in February 1930 had unequivocally stated the fact of the turn. According to the Congress, the aim of the Party's trade-union policy must be to win over the majority of the workers and to lead the proletariat into battle. "To the masses! To the factories!" was the adopted slogan, indicating that the fundamental principle had not changed, only the conception concerning the ways and means of achieving unity was modified. The goal was the militant unity of the organized workers and the unorganized masses under the leadership of the Hungarian Party of Communists against the union bosses. For this reason, the Party had redirected its trade-union activity, out of the unions, to the plants themselves. Underlying this tactic was the belief that the dictatorship of the proletariat could be established directly, without taking into consideration that the organized workers felt an allegiance to their traditional organizations. Furthermore, this approach meant the depreciation of the influence of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, which was considerable, the deepening of the contradiction between the union leaders and the membership and the overestimation of the communists' organizational strength and political influence.

Although the Congress had continued to stress the importance of mass work in the unions, knowing that large numbers of workers had left the unions on account of the leadership's policies and that the great majority of the workers were not even unionized, the Party considered it to be its most important task to organize these workers into strong and militant unions.

The extension of its organizational efforts to cover other sectors of the working class was a most serious task undertaken by the Hungarian Party of Communists. However, to relegate into the background their contact with organized and politically experienced workers contradicted the Party's endeavours in preparing for a general strike, which would have emphasized the political nature of the various strikes taking place. The prerequisites for such a mass strike were least likely to be among the ranks of the unorganized, and the Party possessed neither the organization nor the influence which could have brought about the necessary conditions within a short period of time.

It may well be timely to emphasize once again that the 2nd Congress of the Hungarian Party of Communists did not reject on principle factional and oppositionist struggles within the unions and it did not turn completely away from the unions under social-democratic leadership. It struggled against them, but there was no question of a boycott. However, the fact remains that the Party's trade-union work was carried out in line with the above-mentioned incorrect tactic and therefore, despite all declarations to the contrary, its activity among the unions was viewed as being only secondary in importance.

The resolution of the Congress stated clearly that communist factions must be established in every union: at the central, trade and local levels. The task of the factions, according to the resolution, was to organize and lead the opposition movement, and to bring about a militant oppositionist mass movement. The Congress called for opposition committees to be set up in every trade to coordinate the opposition on that level and it also stated the need for a national body which would lead the whole of the opposition movement. The prerequisite and basis of these committees – in line with the trade-union policy of the Congress – were the local groups, that is, the opposition groups organized in the plants, which would, in due course, join the Profintern both politically and organizationally.

In other words, the 2nd Congress of the Hungarian Party of Communists linked the factionalist work conducted in the splinter organizations with its similar activity within the parent organizations. It placed these endeavours under a single leadership which was assigned the task of laying the foundations of new and militant organizations. In the case of the construction workers, the Party was unsuccessful in its efforts to rally to its side those who had left the union and therefore it used another slogan: fight for the unconditional reacceptance of those who had quit or been expelled and for the organization of a class-conscious militant opposition. In some trades it had decided on setting up independent "red" unions.

The miners' federation had become so weak as a result of the deep seated contradictions between the union bosses and the workers that only five per cent of the workers had remained in the ranks of the union. The Congress had also gone into the details of this situation, concluding that not even the Hungarian Party of Communists was capable of persuading the workers in sufficient numbers to return to this organization. The communists' immediate task, therefore, was to establish a "red" miners' organization. The basis was to be the miners' organization of Salgótarján and district because, according to its delegate to the Congress, the necessary conditions for setting up such a "red" union were present there.

For essentially the same reasons the Congress decided that "red" unions must be set up also among the diggers and agricultural workers because only few of them were organized, and most had become disillusioned with the organization they had, and were not willing to join it, feeling a natural hostility towards it and its leaders.

The resolution further stated that where the local groups of the above unions were nevertheless strong and viable, oppositionist activity should continue. However, it added that such work would have to be made subordinate to the organization of "red" unions, that is, that oppositionist struggles would have to aim openly for the eventual merger with the "red" unions.

In those industrial branches where the workers were almost totally unorganized, either on account of hostility toward union bosses (textile workers, chemical workers) or because they had no organization as such (railroad, tobacco, and public utility workers) the task of the Party was to get down to the concrete organization of "red" unions. This did not mean, however, that it should abandon the possibilities that the legal framework of the depopulated unions offered for it to carry out its oppositionist and factionalist activities. The reason for the trade unions' weakness was seen by the Hungarian Party of Communists in the reformism of the union leaders and it failed to consider the effect of the persecution and terror and the rather backward political consciousness of a part of the workers. The Party overestimated the indisputably growing radicalism of certain groups of workers and, going on that basis, it aimed for the further splintering of union unity.

When making its decision on the establishment of "red" unions, the Hungarian Party of Communists failed to take into sufficient consideration its own organizational strength. While it is true that the Party's strength and influence grew in 1930, nevertheless, the danger did exist whereby the memberships of the "red" unions and the Party organizations would practically coincide. The "red" unions would have been clandestine and could never have been mass organizations. In other words, this plan of the Hungarian Party of Communists was tantamount to rejecting the idea of a mass organization. The gravity of the situation was aggravated by the fact that some of the demands and slogans, intended to revolutionize the working class, were actually rather exaggerated and seemed unrealistic to the workers. The forced nature of the Party's "revolutionary" actions had a counter-productive effect.

In the summer of 1930 not only the incorrect views of the Party leadership were influencing the pace of getting the "red" unions under way, but the Profintern was also urging things along. In a letter to the Central Committee of the Hungarian Party of Communists, the Central-European desk of the Profintern wrote that there was already an element of tardiness which had to be corrected without delay and with every effort on the part of the Hungarian Party of Communists, because in the case of the miners, diggers and agricultural and textile workers, the objective situation was not only favourable for the setting up of such "red" unions, but indeed cried out for such an organization!

Despite the foregoing, the efforts of the Party to establish "red" unions were by no means central to its practice. Hardly had they begun to implement the resolutions of the 2nd Congress, when failures began to pile up. For this reason, already by the second half of 1930, the organization of a revolutionary opposition, rather than "red" unions, was the main goal; but it was understood,

although perhaps not expressed as such, that these opposition groups were to become "red" unions eventually. However, these opposition groups were active within the social-democratic trade unions. Although the base of this opposition movement was within the factories, its overall framework was nevertheless the unions themselves. In other words, it was an organization within an organization and not a new organization outside the unions.

During late 1930 and early 1931, the Party still had in mind the eventual transformation of the opposition groups into "red" unions. The letter of the Central Committee to the membership, which was written on the basis of the Comintern's March 1931 resolution, still urged the establishment of "red" unions, specifically mentioning a "Red Trade Union Opposition", but it also gave the outlines of a new trade-union policy consisting of growing militant opposition groups within the unions. This dualism was mirrored in the initial activities of the reorganized opposition as we can see, for example, from the United Trade Union Opposition's pamphlet which announced its formation and program.

A significant portion of the United Trade Union Opposition's activities took place within the unions. It fought for union democracy and for the unconditional readmission of expelled members who were active in the opposition. Its slogan consisted of a call to join the opposition groups.

The formation of the United Trade Union Opposition was a step forward on the way to correcting the erroneous union tactics of the 2nd Congress. This more realistic view and tactics were due to the fact that the Party recognized that the rank-and-file members still more or less harboured illusions concerning the reformist union leadership and, furthermore, that the unions offered a valuable legal framework for communists, during a period when the Party itself was under severe persecution. By the second half of 1931 the union bosses were resorting to group expulsions in order to break the back of the growing opposition, while the popularity of the latter was on the rise among ordinary workers. In several instances the response to the expulsions took the form of oppositionists getting elected to leading union posts.

In 1931 the thought had still lingered to have the opposition as the base of an eventual militant trade union; however, there was already a change under way and that was indicated by the fact that no longer was there any mention of a timetable, only of careful groundwork. In other words, the tactic had acquired a degree of subtlety, as it regarded the available options, but the basic concept, the essence, still bore the imprint of the incorrect splittist line of the 2nd Congress.

After 1932, the question of a new and independent organization was relegated into the background and there was just the work of the opposition groups as the main task, along with the usual activity within the unions and in the plants. This does not mean that the issue of an independent organization was taken off the agenda, but the sense of urgency was definitely no longer present. The report of the Central Committee on the year 1931 specifically mentioned that the Party carried out its most successful work within the reformist trade unions.

At the May 1932 plenary session of the Central Committee the Party formally

recognized that it failed to bring about the unity of the organized, unorganized and unemployed workers and that neither was it able to assume sufficient leadership on the economic struggle front. The plenary concluded with an order to all party members to join the unions and take active part in their functions. The Party called upon its members to seek union posts. In fact, the 12th Plenary of the Comintern had also directed the communist parties to become active in the reformist trade unions. The Comintern and the Hungarian Party of Communists held the concept of working towards a united front from below, the aim of which would be to weaken the authority and influence of the unions and their reformist leaders. But this concept required the exercise of patience regarding the ordinary members of the reformist unions while the militant program of the Hungarian Party of Communists – although using the slogan of "proletarian self-help" – was urging the formation of a class-conscious, militant united front of the communist, social-democrat, Christian-socialist and politically unaffiliated, organized and unorganized workers. The Party felt that such a united front should be under communist leadership. This was the first instance that the Hungarian Party of Communists included the Christian-socialist workers in its idea of a united front.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST FASCISM

The victory of fascism in Germany created a new set of priorities for the working-class movement, both internationally as well as in Hungary. In addition to stepping up the persecution of the Hungarian Party of Communists, the Gömbös government sought the fascist nationalization of the unions, which would have been nothing less than their liquidation. As one of the steps leading to this, the government established the so-called National Labour Centre, a fascist type of "workers' organization", in order to create some kind of base for itself among the workers.

The January–April 1933 issue of the journal of the Hungarian Party of Communists, *Új Március,* reported that in March the Comintern called upon its sections "to turn to the central leaderships of the social-democratic parties belonging to the Socialist Workers' International with their proposals for united action against fascism and the attacks of capitalism". In April the Hungarian Party of Communists came up with a proposal for a united front, directed at the social-democratic workers, all labour organizations and, for the first time, the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the leaders of the unions. The proposed basis for unity was the defense of labour organizations and their press and the repulsion of the fascist offensive. However, this initiative on the part of the Hungarian Party of Communists was rejected by the Social Democratic Party of Hungary's and the unions' leaderships.

As seen from the foregoing, up to 1933, the Hungarian Party of Communists struggled to bring about a united front, more or less paralleling the tactics of the international communist movement, i.e., a united front without the union leaders

and if possible isolating them. But success would only have been possible with movement from both above and below and if the leaders of both parties had sought to cooperate, free of external motives. As for after 1933, the Hungarian Party of Communists moved only half-heartedly towards the establishment of a united front, but the Social Democratic Party of Hungary did not move at all, shunning all concessions and remaining hostile, politically and tactically anti-communist.

1933 saw a significant turn in the trade-union policy of the communists. It brought down a resolution to the effect that all attempts to establish "red" unions must be thwarted and that emphasis must be placed on work within the reformist unions and on gaining control of local groups and sections. It adopted a very clear slogan in September: "Join the unions!" The leather and construction workers' opposition groups, which were active outside of the social-democrat led unions and were semi-legal independent organizations with their own memberships, surrendered their autonomy at the instruction of the Party and merged with the parent organizations where they quickly became influential at various levels of leadership. The members of the Hungarian Party of Communists welcomed these developments, which had also met with a favourable response on the part of most of the trade unions' social-democratic functionaries. With its new approach, the Hungarian Party of Communists strengthened the unions and contributed to the revitalization of the strike movement. The correctness of this line, politically as well as tactically, was later proven, particularly during the strikes of the construction workers and the 1935 struggles for better wages. The Hungarian Party of Communists strongly emphasized that a differentiation had to be made between the social-democrat leaders and the masses. Although still retaining the use of the inappropriate term "social-fascist", the communists did make it clear that the term applied to the leaders only and not the membership as a whole. In line with the "Join the unions!" slogan, by 1934 the Hungarian Party of Communists had organized new locals and even smaller units where dues could be paid. Another result of the new policy was that the memberships of many unions grew and, in this way, the union opposition groups contributed to the organizational strength of the working class. Furthermore, for the first time, members of the opposition could meet with large numbers of workers who had hitherto had no contact with the genuinely class-conscious workers.

The growing strength of the opposition soon drew the wrath of the social-democratic leadership and expulsions were on the rise in 1934. When the painters' section of the Construction Workers' Federation accepted the communists' united front proposal, the entire section was suspended. The reformist leadership initiated a housecleaning program in some other trades too. This led to bitterness on the part of the workers and efforts to break away increased. The Hungarian Party of Communists condemned the union leaders' policies and their anti-unity measures, but it stuck to its guns: nobody leave, everybody join. It did not support the separatists as nothing was further from its mind than to establish new unions.

An examination of the Party's post-1933 trade-union policy proves that the communist movement, albeit somewhat late, nevertheless did learn from its own mistakes and endeavoured to draw the consequences of the altered international and domestic political situations.

There was, however, a fundamental contradiction. The Central Committee rejected only a part of the incorrect policies of the 2nd Congress – the idea of "red" unions – and retained the concept underlying this as well as one of the means intended to serve the eventual establishment of these unions, the revolutionary union opposition groups.

There were communist leaders who continued to maintain that the reformist trade unions could not be transformed into revolutionary organizations and doubted the chances of the left-wing forces in getting into a position of control. During the summer of 1933 the Central Committee was still of the opinion that the Party would only be able to influence masses of workers if there were independent oppositionist organizations including a large part of the members of the trade federations. It was only at the end of the same year when, on the advice of the Comintern, it stated that the possibility did exist whereby the opposition could transform the reformist trade unions into revolutionary organizations.

This rather ambiguous approach caused a great deal of uncertainty. At times it seemed to support those who were flexible and sought the right path, while at other times it favoured the hard-liners, those with a rigid position. Following 1934 the need for a complete policy overhaul and the overcoming of the contradictions became ever more acute.

In 1935 the Party rejected the view that the unions were organizations of class betrayal and it began to ease up on the use of the epithet "social fascist". It no longer sought to destroy the unions, but rather to take them over. At least in principle, it recognized already in 1934 that the reformist leaders could not be excluded from a united front and it made conscious efforts to stick to demands (universal suffrage, protection of the unions, etc.) on which it could come to a common understanding with the leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the unions. In short, it tried to establish points of unity rather than discord.

Despite all the positive aspects of the work of the union opposition, there still remained some very serious contradictions. The call for unity, voiced by the Hungarian Party of Communists since April 1933, was addressed not only to the memberships of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the unions, but to their leaders as well, that is, also including the reformist ones. The reasons for the unity, its objectives, involved the most crucial tasks facing the movement (protection of the unions, etc.) and the communists were willing to suspend these criticisms for the duration of the cooperation. In 1934 and the following year they made repeated public formal overtures for the formation of a united front. However, they erred in that they assigned an exaggerated significance to a *pro forma* agreement, that they went public and demanded that the reply be made in a likewise manner. This standpoint was unacceptable to the leaders of the Social

Democratic Party of Hungary and the unions. Furthermore, the communists knew that this would be the case, since their calls for a united front still implied continued struggle against the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and it was amply clear that an open avowal of cooperation with the illegal Hungarian Party of Communists would have meant an automatic increase in the repression of both the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the unions.

The leaders of the unions, both centrally and on the section level, were literally bombarded with proposals for a united front by the opposition in the course of 1935. In other words, the opposition played a double game, sometimes acting as an internal opposition body within the union being, nevertheless, under its discipline, while at other times it acted as an independent organization which accepted the discipline and directives of the parent body only as long as it felt like it. It was a justified question on the part of some union members to ask whether the opposition was an independent organization, or just a part of the union. The proposals for unity, although containing realistic demands, seemed to people as being a case of a minority seeking to impose its will on the majority. This gave the reformist leaders an opportunity to charge the opposition groups with trying to destroy the unity of the unions. Willy-nilly, the United Trade Union Opposition bore all of the characteristics of an anti-trade-union centre.

Following the 7th Congress of the Comintern, the communists gradually recognized and corrected this contradiction, as a result of which the Party's trade-union politics became more flexible and effective. In November 1935 a debate started within the Central Committee of the Party concerning the transformation of the opposition groups into merely the left wing of the unions. The result of this was that in December of the same year the central organization of the United Trade Union Opposition was disbanded and the central and the trade papers of the opposition ceased publication.

In January 1936 the Central Committee sent a letter to all members of the Party and the Hungarian Federation of Young Communist Workers. In that it analysed the Party's trade-union policy and stated the nature of the forthcoming tasks. The letter emphasized that instead of the watchword of taking over the unions, the task then was to strengthen them. The drive for greater membership was no longer linked to that former goal, now the Party "rallies the masses of workers to the side of the unions in order to make them stronger, to increase the level of organization of the working class, to make it all the more powerful in the struggle against capitalism and fascism!"[13]

The liquidation of the opposition groups brought an end to parallel organizations. The Trade Union Left Wing, although still bearing traces of its former outsider stance, indicated even by its name that it was not an independent organization, only the left wing of the union. It fought for the protection of the

[13] *Dokumentumok a magyar forradalmi munkásmozgalom történetéből 1935–1945* (Documents on the history of the Hungarian revolutionary working-class movement 1935–1945), Budapest, 1964, Vol. III, p. 49.

unions, their strengthening, for the workers' interests, for a revolutionary line in the leadership and, above all, against fascism. In organizing the economic struggles, the Hungarian Party of Communists' objective after 1936 was no longer the immediate revolutionizing of the workers, nor the unmasking and isolation of the union bosses. The party slogan for that situation was "The aim of all strikes must be the strengthening of the unions!" The essence of the tactic of strikes hitherto had been to have a work stoppage in spite of the union leaders, but this had changed as we can see, for example, in the 1937, No. 1–2 issue of the *Dolgozók Lapja* (Workers' paper) which stated that the Party endeavoured to have "the strikes initiated by the unions and with the participation of the union leaders ...". This change in the communists' trade-union policies had meant not only a return to the pre-1928 tactics, although much had been rescued from those times, but also that an even more realistic trade-union policy was in the making.

The new line had cleverly frustrated the reformist union leaders' opportunist politics and their anti-communist activities, because it had aroused sympathy towards the communists on the part of the unions' rank and file. The position of the communists within the unions improved, the union leadership was forced to recognize them as a "tolerated extreme left tendency"; and they were less likely to be expelled.

The June 10th, 1939 resolution of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Party of Communists stated that from the point of view of the anti-fascist struggle the trade unions were in a key position and possessed decisive significance. "These unions' influence extends far beyond their own memberships, and the petty-bourgeoisie also consider them as being the representatives of the workers. Our struggle against fascism to a large degree hinges on the role that the unions are going to play. The decisive crux of the question of a united front with social-democratic workers and union leaders and those who are influenced by social democracy is the transformation of the unions into class-conscious, militant, resolutely anti-fascist strongholds".[14]

The organized workers and even most of the union functionaries greeted the new trade-union policy favourably and cooperated with the communists. As a result of this, the influence of the communists was growing in several unions (construction, leather, lumber, iron, textile and chemical) and communists were elected to leading posts in several unions. Elsewhere the earlier expelled members of the opposition were invited to return. The development of a correct line on the trade unions was due to the fact that after the 7th Congress of the Comintern the Hungarian Party of Communists examined its own politics and unequivocally came out in favour of the strategic goal of a democratic Hungary.

[14] The Archives of the Institute of Party History, fond 500.

THE PROBLEM OF UNION UNITY DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

After 1938 the communists held the struggle for an independent democratic Hungary to be the foremost task for themselves and democrats alike. The Hungarian Party of Communists subordinated its union politics to this aim.

After the outbreak of the war the government assumed special powers which it exploited to further restrict the independence of the trade unions and to infringe on their autonomy. The Hungarian Party of Communists fought to protect the labour organizations, the workers' rights, the improvement of their living standard and against specific aspects of the exercise of those special powers.

The communist policy on unity, following the Comintern Congress, did not mean the discontinuance of sharp criticism levelled at the anti-unity politics of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the right-wing union leaders. The criticisms were now well based, reflected a real need and served the main political goal of unity. The Hungarian Party of Communists was very active in recruiting new people into the unions and sought to mobilize the entire organized working class to become politically involved because, as stated above, it wanted the unions to survive as the legal organization of the working class and to become the vanguard of the struggle for the independence and democratization of the nation.

By the spring of 1940 the Hungarian Party of Communists succeeded in establishing party cells in the various trades and a committee was set up to coordinate them. To reduce unemployment, the communists initiated a vigorous fight for the nullification of special legislation concerning the eight-hour workday and paid holidays.

In the meantime the leaders of the Social Democratic Party[15] and the unions tried once again to get rid of the communists. But by this time a significant portion of the social-democrat members of the unions opposed such efforts. The number of those union members and functionaries who considered the participation of the communists and the left vital for the Social Democratic Party and the unions continued to grow.

The Hungarian Party of Communists defended the unions in face of the attacks of the government and the extreme right. In the spring of 1940 it threw itself full-heartedly into supporting the membership drive of the Social Democratic Party and the unions. As a result, there was hardly a union to be found which did not have communists in its leadership; that is, labour unity got strengthened. Now the Hungarian Party of Communists did'not want to take the unions over, but only to isolate the Peyerist right wing politically, because they were the foremost obstacle to unity. It was precisely on this account that cooperation between the communists and the left wing of the Social Democratic Party was increasing. The Hungarian Party of Communists attacked the passivity of the social democrats'

[15] At the 1939 Congress of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary the Party's name was changed to Social Democratic Party.

right wing, its tendency to compromise and repeated retreats, but its method and tone of criticism had changed: there were fewer personal attacks and defamatory charges and the criticism became more principled. It no longer struggled against the Social Democratic Party itself, but against "social democratism" and the "ideology of submission".

As a result of the correct policy of the Hungarian Party of Communists, the unions' left wing was becoming stronger and this provided the Party with an opportunity to try once again to bring about an anti-fascist united front from above. In the autumn of 1941 it started negotiations with the left wing of the Social Democratic Party towards this end. The Hungarian Party of Communists believed that labour unity was an essential matter for the nation and that only the working class was capable of being the mainstay of the national resistance against the Germans and fascism. But the leadership of the working class could only become effective if the prerequisites were met, i.e., if there was political and, following that, organizational unity. The legal workers' organizations were the main base of the independence movement.

After 1941 the Hungarian Party of Communists worked out the details of its trade-union policy which it had begun after 1938. The basic consideration of that policy was to strengthen union unity and make the unions into the class organizations of the workers. Already in 1938 the Hungarian Party of Communists had recognized that under the given circumstances the unions could not be the exclusive domain of either the communists or the social democrats, but that their leadership had to be shared on the basis of socialist principles.

During the war the unions and the left wing of the Social Democratic Party had come to recognize that circumstances had changed and that there was no union movement without the communists. The rightists in the leaderships of the unions and the Social Democratic Party refused to recognize and accept this, but the fact remained that the leadership monopoly that the social democrats had hitherto enjoyed had come to an end. This was due to the strengthening of the left wing in both the Social Democratic Party and the unions. Aware of this, the Hungarian Party of Communists declared that the situation was ripe for the establishment of labour unity.

The Hungarian Party of Communists had kept the future firmly in mind while it was working on bringing about unity. Unity was necessary not only in the fight against fascism and the war, but also by way of preparation for the period that would follow the collapse of fascism. It was necessary to prepare the democratic forces – primarily the working class – both politically and ideologically for the tasks of the democratic transformation.

The essence of the new trade-union policy of the communists during the war years was that the unity of the working class should be brought about on the basis of an agreement between the two workers' parties and through a sharing of the leadership of the unions. The road leading to the unity of the workers' parties passed through tradeiunion unity.

By 1944 the Social Democratic Party was forced to recognize that in the

coming united trade-union movement communist leadership and the influence of communist ideology were most likely to increase steadily, at the expense of the social democrats. This achievement on the part of the Hungarian Party of Communists was due to its *Realpolitik* and principled political line which combined the class struggle with national interests.

The struggle for a united working class was an organic part of the battle for the universal interests of Hungarian society. The success of Hungary's democratic transformation depended on whether or not through the achievement of the complete and militant unity of the working class the communists could bring about such a solid and indestructible front to which the overwhelming majority of the Hungarian people would turn with confidence, as the program manifesto of the Hungarian Party of Communists stated at the end of September 1944. Underlying the efforts to bring about the unity of the working class was the idea of a broad-based, democratic national unity and, beyond, that of a democratic Hungary.

The roots of the new trade-union policy lay in the new position of the Hungarian Party of Communists regarding the proletarian revolution. In 1930, the desire to take over the unions and to gain recognition for the right of existence of communist led "red" unions had been fed by the idea of an immediate proletarian revolution, a view according to which the Russian example had been the sole model to be followed. No attempt had been made to examine the various forms and alternatives of a transitional phase or path leading to the proletarian revolution. In 1944, however, the communists' new trade-union policy was inspired by the concept of a democratic revolution which would constitute the transition to socialism. The trade-union policy of 1930 had demanded a monopoly on the part of the proletariat in the new system to be directly brought about. One the other hand, in 1944 the communist tactic only called for the hegemony of the working class and not for its exclusive political power.

The objective of union unity was a compromise, expedient and politically unavoidable which served the cause of the working class and democracy. The need for that compromise and its unavoidability was fully recognized only by the Hungarian Party of Communists and the left wing of the Social Democratic Party. On October 10th, 1944 the representatives of the two parties signed an agreement concerning their mutual cooperation after the liberation. This contained concessions on the part of both parties. The rightist trade-union leaders refused to be party to such an agreement, which only indicated their political shortsightedness and stubbornness.

The unity document stated the following: "The successful outcome of the Hungarian people's struggle for peace and, with the swift conclusion to the war, for a new democratic Hungary can only be guaranteed by the revolutionary unity, decisiveness and leadership of the working class and by that alone. In view of this the Social Democratic Party and the Hungarian Party of Communists stated that there now exists a crisis need for the establishment of the militant revolutionary unity of the Hungarian working class".

The agreement went beyond this in the section on the trade unions: "Independently of the timing of the merger of the two parties, the unity of the Hungarian working class within the framework of the trade unions must be brought about as soon as possible ... The trade unions of the Hungarian working class must embrace all strata and members of the Hungarian working class, regardless of their party affiliations or political views".[16]

The negotiators representing the Social Democratic Party, the Hungarian Party of Communists and now also the trade unions, achieved agreement on all these above points. But one point of the agreement which stated that under the name "Federation of Open Trade Unions" the Social Democratic Party and the Hungarian Party of Communists were going to set up a unified trade union of the Hungarian working class as well as the additional clause concerning the tasks of the mobilization for the struggle against fascism, were left in abeyance and taken off the agenda of the talks due to the resistance of the rightist union leaders.

For the second time in the history of the Hungarian workers' movement a unified trade-union movement was established in the autumn of 1944, first, with the signing of the agreement between the two workers' parties, only in principle, and then in the liberated zones also in practice. It was through its revitalized political conception that the Hungarian Party of Communists arrived at this significant stage of the united front. The policy of unity was victorious because the political line that inspired unity was backed by the approval and support of the communist and social-democratic workers. This unity set the stage for the later established organizational unity of the two parties of the Hungarian working class. Trade-union unity was the basis on which the working class could take charge of the democratic transformation of the nation after the war and the trade-union movement could play a decisive role in getting people organized to lift the country out of the ravages of war and to get life back to normal.

[16] *Dokumentumok a magyar forradalmi munkásmozgalom történetéből, 1935–1945.* Budapest, 1964, Vol. III, p. 562.

THE TRADE UNIONS, EMPLOYERS AND THE STATE IN HUNGARY DURING THE EARLY 1920's

by

Péter Sipos

The historical mission of the proletariat is to overthrow capitalism and to replace it with a socialist social order. Revolutionary crises are, however, relatively rare and brief. There are a number of possible outcomes: e.g. the proletariat becomes the ruling class and begins the construction of socialism; or it fails in the attempt to seize power; or it is victorious, but, owing to the unfavourable international circumstances and to direct outside intervention, it has no choice but to resign. The latter was the case in Hungary in 1919.

After the defeat of the Hungarian Republic of Councils, the circumstances of the workers' lives were once again determined by capitalism, with the only way of survival being the sale of one's labour to an employer, i.e., to the bourgeoisie, which owned the means of production. The regulation of the concrete prerequisites of the sale of labour power had again come to the fore. This problem would have arisen in an entirely different form, had the state of the proletariat remained in power. It is understandable that in the heat of the struggle for the revolutionary transformation of the entire social order this problem had seemed secondary in importance.

The point of contention concerning this problem touches upon the extent of the workers' and the employers' respective roles to be assumed in decisions regarding wages and the conditions of work. In the age of imperialism and particularly following the First World War, the state, which represented the interests of the bourgeoisie and the landowners, had demanded the right to have a say, in fact, to have the final say in certain cases of such matters. As is only too well known the repressive organization of the ruling class does not function as a monolithic unit, but through institutions and various authorities. We must examine the behaviour, actions and motives of all three forces which have a role in determining the workers' lives and which, in the series of day to day conflicts, do influence the revolutionary potential of the working class. The three forces in question are the organized workers, the employers and the public authorities.

THE REORGANIZATION OF THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

As the first flyer of the Hungarian Trade Union Council had put the tasks facing the workers in August 1919, after the defeat of the Republic of Councils, the workers would have to return to the path defined by the unions and the organized working class would have to gather up all its strength in order to defend the rights won through decades of struggle and to build up the country with its productive labour. However, there was no discussion of just where the mentioned path was abandoned, nor was there any concerning what was to be done in the future. Similarly, it was unclear just what period and precisely what rights were being referred to.

From other statements by the leaders who were just reorganizing the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the trade-union movement, it is uniformly clear that they considered the dictatorship of the proletariat a mere detour which should not be allowed to recur. "Had we been content with what we had back in March we would now be ahead of our Austrian and Czech counterparts. We've lost a lot, but not so much that we cannot undo the damage", said Károly Peyer, the secretary of the miners' union, at the August 24, 1919 extraordinary party meeting, which had reestablished the Social Democratic Party of Hungary that had ceased to exist as such on the 21st of March of the same year. Peyer merely chalked up the entire 133 days of the Republic of Councils as a loss. The congress emphatically declared the validity of the old program and organizational rules and that the Social Democratic Party of Hungary belonged to the Second and not to the Third International.

Not only from the statements made at party meetings and other forums as well as from articles in social-democratic publications, but also from the whole of the Party's political activities, we get the singular impression that the majority of the social-democratic leaders still thought during the early 1920's that their past activities towards the liquidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat would bring political benefits or the granting of concessions on the part of the authorities. What they had in mind was the creation of a bourgeois democratic system which would be a favourable type of political atmosphere for the economic struggles of the working class, more favourable than it had been under the pre-1914 conservative-liberal regime.

The fact that the international workers' movement was going strong (although by the autumn of 1919 it had passed its peak), was also a source of encouragement to the social democrats. In March 1920 the German working class prevented the extreme right from staging a coup to overthrow bourgeois democracy. The British trade unions were successful in their efforts to thwart the Tory government's plans for another anti-Soviet interventionist campaign. In the summer of 1920 the International Federation of Trade Unions organized a boycott in protest against the white terror in Hungary. In November 1919 progressive forces in Italy had made substantial gains in the elections and in the summer of the following

year the movement to occupy the factories had got under way. In August of that year the Soviet Red Army was at the gates of Warsaw.

The leaders of the unions and of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary supposed that with the international situation being what it was the white terror in Hungary would not be able to consolidate its power. As one of the prominent men in the Party's leadership, Sándor Propper recalled the optimistic mood twenty years later: Many people considered the counter-revolution to be a merely transitory phenomenon and they could not believe that in a Europe resounding with the noise of revolution, a counter-revolutionary system could actually last in such a small country.

The Hungarian social democrats had considered the international working class to be a major factor, capable of forcing the Entente powers to keep to their promises – among them particularly the British who had played a leading role at the Vienna negotiations in the summer of 1919 which were convened with the express purpose of liquidating the Republic of Councils. Vilmos Böhm, the former ambassador to Austria during the time of the Republic of Councils, repeatedly called the attention of the British Labour Party to this saying that the Hungarian workers had avoided a bloodbath and in accord with the wishes of the Entente powers had surrendered; and that they had earned the right therefore to expect protection by the Entente powers.

A common thread running through the memoranda reaching the forums of the international social-democratic movement is that the Hungarian social democrats had expected an international military intervention to bring an end to the Horthy regime. In September 1919 two bourgeois radicals, Oscar Jászi and Pál Szende, suggested, with the approval of Vilmos Böhm and Gyula Peidl, the Prime Minister of the so-called trade-union government which lasted only six days[1], that the withdrawal of the Royal Armed Forces of Romania should be followed by elections held under the supervision of a 15–20,000 strong Anglo-American police force. In a December 1920 memorandum to Camille Huysmans, Károly Peyer called for the demobilization of Horthy's gangsters and for their replacement by an international police force which would be organized by either the Triple Entente or the so-called Little Entente.

Striking at the external affairs of the Hungarian counter-revolutionary regime, the social democrats wanted to have the Western powers call for the restoration of bourgeois democratic rights, that is, their extension to all. In the above-mentioned document, Peyer also requested that all the labour parties of the countries involved should use the opportunity afforded by the parliamentary debates on the ratification of the Treaty of Trianon to expose the true situation in Hungary. The

[1] Following the resignation of the Revolutionary Governing Council, a new government was set up on the 1st of August, 1919 with Gyula Peidl as Prime Minister. It was a social-democratic government mainly made up of trade-union leaders. It started to liquidate the achievements of the Republic of Councils in the hope that a counter-revolutionary dictatorship might be avoided if they succeed in establishing a bourgeois democratic system.

leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary still saw a similar opportunity for such a move in 1923–1924 when the Hungarian government applied for a reconstruction loan, the granting of which largely depended upon the backing of Great Britain. Through various channels, they appealed to the British Labour Party to make the granting of the loan depend upon the termination of the terror in Hungary and the establishment of a more democratic regime.

But all of these plans and ideas were brought to nought by the changes in the international situation, just as in 1918 when the leaders of the bourgeois democratic revolution had great expectations of President Wilson, or as in 1919, when the leaders of the Republic of Councils had great faith in the coming world revolution. Once the peace treaties had all been signed in Versailles, precisely those powers of whom the Hungarian social democrats had such great expectations, Britain and, to a lesser extent, the United States, turned their attentions elsewhere; now focusing on the Far East and the Pacific region, they were far more concerned with the struggle to re-divide the world than with the problems of Europe. England's solė concern with the area of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was the preservation of order and peace between the various nations so that wars, serious crises and socialist revolutions might be prevented. Britain's attitude towards Hungary was governed by this same view. As a memorandum of the Foreign Office had stated, their sole interest regarding the government of Hungary was that it be strong and peaceful and that it therefore be in the hands of people whom His Majesty's government might trust. Considering that a possible Habsburg restoration would have met with the strongest resistance of the neighbouring countries, the British government supported Horthy, of whom a British chargé d'affairs remarked that it was not to be forgotten that His Serene Highness was their creature.

At the same time, the rule of Horthy and his supporters was a guarantee of domestic law and order and a merciless repression of any possible new revolutionary uprising. The West-European labour movement and public opinion were not to be disregarded, however, and that called for public relations to make the Admiral more presentable. His Majesty's diplomats had repeatedly admonished Horthy and his advisors to avoid an open military dictatorship and to deal with the social-democratic labour movement as a real and legitimate presence.

In other words, nothing worked out as the social democrats had hoped and Horthy was given a green light for the establishment of a counter-revolutionary regime provided they were not to liquidate parliamentarianism completely, nor outlaw the reformist labour organizations. But aside from these points no outside pressure was likely concerning the extent of civil liberties since no external force which could have put its will into effect now under Horty was concerned with the achievements of the 1918 bourgeois revolution. After 1921–1922 it was mainly the internal balance of power that decided just what the working class and its movements could achieve in the area of democratic rights.

All hopes for a return to 1918 were dissipated as the international political

scene underwent a freeze. Hungary's domestic situation was such that even a return to the pre-1914 condition was in doubt as far as the working-class movement was concerned, given the presence of aggressive forces for whom time began in 1919 and who felt most at home in an atmosphere of perpetual terror.

THE PROFILE OF THE NEW POWER STRUCTURE

From August 1919 to April 1921 Hungary saw several changes of government. In 1921 there were two legitimist attempted coups[2] and the political consolidation could only set in with the June 1922 elections when, through the employ of treacherous means, an ample majority was assured in the single-chamber national assembly for Prime Minister Count István Bethlen's United Party[3], hammered together in early 1922. A characteristic trait of the early years of the Horthy regime and at the same time one of the fundamental reasons why the consolidation took so long was the internal power struggle among the ruling classes and the middle classes aligned with them. This struggle had also influenced the whole of the regime's labour policies.

The déclassé gentry elements, who had once belonged to the landed nobility and who were now civil servants, officers, or intellectuals, constituted the basis of the military detachments which were the mainstay of the counter-revolution. The landowners and the rich peasants were highly influential in the National Assembly that was elected in 1920 as well as in the rapidly changing succeeding governments. Both the déclassé elements as well as the landowners not only opposed the revolutions of 1918 and 1919, but they also rejected Hungary's entire capitalist development that had been going on since 1867, which, among other things, they blamed for having given rise to the locomotive of revolution – the working class. According to these elements, the energies of the nation must be focused on agricultural production and the only role for industry was to process the raw materials produced by agriculture and animal breeding and to provide the rural areas with goods and tools. Were such ideas to be put into effect, they would have entailed the closure of entire branches of industry, the stagnation of others and the decentralization of those remaining, which would have decimated the numbers of big industrial workers, reduce the degree of their concentration and thereby also the scope of their "subversive" activities.

According to the director of the Hungarian Association of Landowners there was no class struggle in Hungary in the Marxian sense, but only a poverty-stricken stratum, which also included the workers who deserved society's help as a "matter

[2] Between March 26 and April 5, 1921 and October 20–23 of the same year, the feudal aristocracy and the Catholic clergy executed an unsuccessful attempt to remove Regent Horthy and to return Karl IV to the Habsburg throne. At the wishes of the Entente powers, the National Assembly declared the end of the rule of the House of Habsburg on November 6, 1921.

[3] Between 1922 and 1932 the official name of the government party of the counter-revolutionary system was the Christian Small-Holder, Peasant and Bourgeois Party.

of conscience" through an appropriate social policy. They saw the solution in getting every worker to have a family house, garden and a small private plot in the backyard. Not only was the proletariat to be made into a proprietor – not exactly a novel idea for the sidetracking of the workers' dissatisfaction – but it was to be made to conform to a backward agrarian society as well.

It is obvious that this view which questioned the right of the working class to exist as a class was even less likely to recognize the independent political movement of that class, regardless of its reformist or revolutionary intentions. "I see no reason for accepting social democrats because I know that by tomorrow they'll be Bolsheviks", wrote Gyula Rubinek, one of the leading politicians representing the landowners' interests, in the January 2, 1922 issue of the *Pesti Hírlap*. Endre Zsilinszky (later Bajcsy-Zsilinszky), the ideologue-publicist of the gentry class, wrote much the same thing earlier in the *Szózat* on November 28, 1919: "The destructive force of Hungarian social democracy swept the industrial workers and with them the nation into the arms of Bolshevism." These elements, civil servants, army officers and intellectuals, opposed capitalist development not only on economic grounds, i.e., because for them the economic welfare of the big landowners was paramount, but also because they were anti-Semites and racists. Their line was that Hungarian capitalism was a Jewish thing and that it was "the sinful greed of this alien race" that drove the Hungarian workers to despair. The following quote is taken from Zsilinszky's *Szózat* (December 19, 1919): "The overwhelming majority of the workers is Hungarian and Christian. Most of the capitalists in Budapest are aliens, or at least their souls are alien."

These people had a characteristically fascist solution as to how the class struggle should be terminated. According to them, the capital should be put into "nationalist" and "Christian" hands whereby it would no longer be greedy and parasitic in nature and would have the proper charitable attitude toward the problems of the workers who were also "nationalists" and "Christians". In one of his pamphlets published in 1920, Gömbös, a former staff officer, gave the following formulation of the essence of the so-called "Hungarian national socialism": "Although we want to retain that we have inherited from our ancestors – our religion, traditions and wealth – but, understanding the mood of the times, we are prepared to give our poverty-stricken compatriots as much as is necessary to ensure for them the opportunity to overcome their lot by their labour."

According to this chauvinist-anti-Semitic welfare demagoguery, the achievement of peace between the classes, a class truce, was up to the state; a view that was clearly fascist. In the diary of Miklós Kozma, captain of the Hussars, we find the following: "Throughout Europe there has been strong state intervention in the countries' economic development and this should be all the more the case in Hungary because we have, on the one hand, manifestations of revolutionary ambitions and an exaggerated desire to dominate the others and, on the other hand, the greed and growing accumulation of wealth by the capitalists, the majority of whom are of an alien race."

There were also concrete plans worked out by these people concerning the role of the state as an arbitrator of the conflict between capital and labour. Eckhardt, a former chief constable, proposed that the state should establish a "non-partisan" body for the peaceful settlement of conflicts and an independent organization which would run the factories in case of strikes and which, as a most pressing task, should organize the workers on a "nationalist basis". These were not merely individual proposals; all of these ideas were either implemented or at least reached the trial stage.

Particularly during 1919 and 1920 was the country rife with so-called "nationalist" labour parties which, primarily supported by gentry-military circles, were recruiting under nationalist slogans. At the end of 1920 the National United Labour Bloc was founded. Its members were the Christian National Labour Federation, the Federation of National Labour Leagues, the National Party of Hungarian Workers, the Christian Federation of the Factory Workers of Budapest and the Labour Party of Hungary. Most of these organizations existed in name only and even the military authorities concerned with these groups did not bother to note down any data on their memberships. Their organizers were ambitious people with no visible means of income and according to an official report of the time they either lacked or possessed very limited gifts for nationalist agitation and their intellectual capacities were zero.

As a last ditch attempt, the Bloc was renamed the Hungarian National Labour Party, but this was also doomed to failure. This was the final episode of the "founding fever" of the "nationalist" labour movement, the legacy of which was only a few pamphlets and unpaid bills.

Somewhat more significant, but nevertheless unsuccessful, were the results achieved by the Christian-socialist trade unions which were supported by the Catholic clergy. These unions did have in Hungary, too, certain traditions in undermining the camp of organized labour. Their memberships multiplied in the so-called "Christian course", as the period following the defeat of the Republic of Councils was called in the press. The Christian-socialists were more successful than the "nationalist" movement people. The explanation for this, besides the disappointment, fear and hopes of the workers, lies in the fact that they spoke up in defense of the workers' interests and formulated concrete demands. József Szabó, a Member of Parliament and one of the leaders of the Christian-socialists, demanded in a September 1920 speech in the House that the labour grievance committees[4], which operated during the war years, be reestablished. The

[4] In early 1915, when the boom started in the war industry, the employers asked for military trusteeship over their factories. In the trusteed factories a series of measures were introduced which contravened the interests of the workers who were themselves placed under military discipline. Nevertheless, beginning in the summer of the same year, an organized movement was started by the workers for higher wages and better conditions. In order to defuse the dissatisfaction, in January 1916 the government issued a decree concerning the establishment of labour grievance committees. The committees were made up of officials, representatives of the employers and delegates from the unions to represent the workers. In July that year these committees were given the right to arbitrate in wage disputes.

leadership of the Christian-socialist National Trade Union of Iron and Metal Workers addressed a memorandum to the Prime Minister in which it called for a 50–75 per cent wage increase, wage parities and the reestablishment of the grievance committees. In July 1921 the Christian-socialist woodworkers' trade union protested the lowering of the workers' wages by the lumber industry section of the National Federation of Industrialists. The month of August 1923 witnessed the strike by engine drivers and stokers, the largest one during the entire counter-revolutionary era. In the organization of this strike the Christian-socialists had a significant role. The strike was squelched and a situation report by the military was sorry to have to conclude that it was an unfortunate accident that the organization of the engine drivers and stokers was the biggest under Christian-socialist leadership and that the organization's liquidation signalled the defeat of Christian-socialism. The rapid decline in the fortunes of the movement caused a serious internal crisis and in 1926 the movement split in two. By the end of the decade they had less than fifty thousand members, which was not even a quarter of what they had had in 1920, their peak year.

In the bankruptcy of both the "nationalist" and the Christian-socialist labour movements a significant role was played by the fact that neither was able to attract the support of the bourgeoisie and of the civilian authorities in the government. There were two alternatives: these organizations were either powerless and incapable of establishing lasting ties with the workers, in which case they were not worth supporting, or, when they did try to win mass support, they were forced to use anti-capitalist slogans and to resort to imitating the militant labour movement, in which case they were rather unpleasant and even dangerous partners. On the morrow of the revolutions of 1918–1919 the Hungarian bourgeoisie feared nothing more than the demon of socialist demagoguery.

THE EMPLOYERS' MOVEMENT

Undoubtedly, as long as the fake organizations were still busy, the economic type of class organizations of the bourgeoisie, of the employers, tried to profit from the existence of the "nationalist" and Christian-socialist organizations by referring to them in rejecting the social-democratic trade unions' demand to be recognized as the sole representative of the working class. The Federation of the Master Builders of Budapest sent an official communication to the Federation of Construction Workers in March 1920, stating that the situation did not seem at all as clear and ripe that any one representative of the workers as a whole could be recognized. The leaders of the National Federation of Industrialists were thinking along the same lines as we can see from their stand against the reestablishment of the shop-steward system in May 1920. They stated that this question was not at all timely because the workers had several organizations and other bodies representing their interests and it would lead to total chaos and the end of labour discipline if the employers had to recognize the representatives of various such

groups. But even this was only a temporary "achievement" of these phony labour groups, lasting only months. The 1922 report of the National Federation of Industrialists was forced to conclude that the new organizations failed to crack the unity of the social-democratic labour movement.

The bourgeoisie's reluctance to support these groups to any great extent was influenced by financial considerations as well. It was obvious that the development of a large-scale "nationalist" movement would cost a fortune and that the organizing, propaganda and administration work would constantly require huge sums of money. The Christian-socialists just barely managed to keep going on the handouts given them by the Roman Catholic Church, which, of course, was rolling in money.

The state was not willing to shoulder the financial burden of organizing. The request of the National United Labour Bloc for financial aid was simply filed away in the welfare department of the Prime Minister's Office. The capitalists were hardly in favour of Eckhardt's idea that instead of the state, the employers should foot the bill according to their number of workers.

The bourgeoisie was also apprehensive that they might have to agree to certain welfare concessions which would cut into their profits, so that these phony organizations could show the workers that they could deliver more than promises. On the other hand, there were really no guarantees that they would be able to succeed in what they were intended for, i.e., in luring masses of workers away from the social-democratic trade unions. In other words, the money spent on organizing and the granting of minor concessions would not have brought any returns.

The bourgeoisie also rejected another major thesis voiced by the above-mentioned politicians regarding state intervention in the capital–labour relationship. *Magyar Gyáripar* (Hungarian industry), the journal of the National Federation of Industrialists, clearly stated in its December 1919 issue that the only correct stand on the part of the state was that of non-involvement.

The organizations of the employers, the institutions representing the economic interests of the Hungarian industrialist bourgeoisie, were mostly established at the turn of the century. In 1899 the National Association of Hungarian Iron Works and Machine Factories, in 1901 the National Association of Hungarian Mining and Metallurgical Companies and the National Association of Hungarian Leather Factories, and in 1902 the National Federation of Hungarian Industrialists were set up, the latter as a summit organization of the major and medium size industries' owners. Within the framework of the National Association of Hungarian Iron Works and Machine Factories a "Labour Affairs Organization" was set up, which was the first of its kind in Hungary. The anniversary yearbook of the National Association of Hungarian Iron Works and Machine Factories stated that it was necessary to branch out in this direction because the trade unions had quickly strained labour relations early in the century.

It was one of the important characteristics of Hungarian industrial development that even during the stage of monopoly capitalism, in certain branches

(wood, food, clothing, shoes, construction, printing, and the iron and metal industries) small-scale industry remained a very significant factor and hence a good portion of the memberships of the unions were also to be found there. The big strikes between 1904 and 1907 forced their owners, too, to form associations. The strongest of such organizations, the National Association of Hungarian Construction Industrialists, was established in 1907.

Like the bourgeoisie of other European countries, the Hungarian capitalists too had their initial experience with state management of the economy and labour affairs during the First World War. Not surprisingly, they were in full accord with the measures which denied the workers the right to participate in a movement and to change jobs. But they were less than pleased that the authorities were willing to grant certain wage concessions to the workers as prices were rising, in order to ensure steady production in the war industry. They were especially sore about the setting up of the grievance committees, a deal whereby they felt that only the employers lost in any decision handed down by those bodies. They further alleged that the activity of such committees undercut the economic base of industrial production. A bourgeois historian, writing about the social policies of the war years, had the following to say about the mood of the capitalists: "Their despair grows in proportion to the extent to which the grievance committees bring down pro-labour decisions. Quite a few of them [the capitalists] would be only too willing to do without the advantages of the workers' being bound to their work places and would accept the old system, which was rejected during peace time and is still firmly rejected, whereby the employers and the labour organizations would negotiate and come to an agreement, if in this way they could be rid of the grievance committees."[5]

After the defeat of the Republic of Councils, the owners of the factories and of the small workshops recognized a need to present a united front to the workers. The role of the employers' organizations was also increased by the fact that one of the economic results of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was the temporary dissolution of the cartell system, the basic form of monopoly organization in Hungary, and it was not until the second half of the 1920's, during the economic consolidation, that this system was reorganized.

In November 1919 the National Federation of Industrialists took also an official stand against the reestablishment of the grievance committees. In their opinion there was no need for any mediatory, arbitrating or authoritative organizations to be set up under state jurisdiction. The leaders of the bourgeoisie's organs and institutions kept repeating that the contradiction between capital and labour was a constant aspect of capitalist production and that the intensity of labour conflict depended on the state of the economy. The capitalists were reserving for themselves the right to assess the situation, to choose the ways and means of dealing with the workers at any one given time, and

[5] Dezső Pap: *A magyar szociálpolitika a világháborúban* (Hungary's social policies during the First World War). Budapest, 1934, p. 140.

to make the necessary concessions as dictated by the economic circumstances. The January 1922 issue of the *Magyar Gyáripar* summed up the essence of this view in a concise manner, saying that the capitalists "will never allow outsiders to have a say in the factories' most crucial economic questions because such people cannot know the rapidly rising and falling fortunes of the economy and they cannot know what each factory's capacities are, and, most important, they are not responsible for the management of the factories".

In 1919–1921 the Hungarian economy was in dire straits but no concessions were seen as being necessary on the part of the capitalists. The extremely low level of industrial production, which in 1920 reached the 35–40 per cent level of 1913 and in 1921 its 51 per cent, together with the unprecedented number of layoffs, meant an unfavourable climate for wage hike demands. "Factories employing thousands were becoming decimated in terms of staff", wrote a bourgeois economist.[6] Exploiting this and the restrictions on the freedom of the labour movement, the bourgeoisie established a wage freeze which was so iron clad that not even during the war was there anything like it and nothing even close to it since the development of the modern trade-union movement.

At its first meeting after the defeat of the Republic of Councils, the National Federation of Industrialists decided that the firms should only make a downpayment, the amount of which must not be more than 50 per cent of the hourly wage during the dictatorship of the proletariat. Then this decision was repeatedly extended. Finally, at the end of September and early October, they worked out a binding wage scale, also on the basis of the 50 per cent wage drop. As a result of the galloping inflation, nominal wages increased, but the growth nowhere near matched the price jumps. The per cent growth of the weighed average of the cost of living on December 31, 1920 as compared to July 31, 1914 was 4,180 and by December 1921 this rose to 5,724, whereas the ratio of the wage increases was only 1,606 and 3,152 respectively. The index number of the standard of living of the working class, taking the weekly subsistence minimum during peace time – 42.68 *koronas* – as 100, was 76.3 per cent on July 31, 1914, 30.1 per cent on December 31, 1920, and 42.1 per cent on December 31, 1921.

While for the individual worker it was his low real income that caused misery for him and his family, the unions were facing ruin on account of the method of how wages were fixed. "In determining the wage scale, there was no way of giving a hearing to the organizations representing the interests of the workers, partly because in those days the unions were not functioning yet and partly because even under the present circumstances it is impossible to determine that of the existing and the just forming organizations alleged to represent the workers which are to be accepted as negotiation partners", wrote the rag of the industrialists in October 1919, using an already mentioned old refrain now in connection with a justification for the wage freeze. The rationalization involved the raising of

[6] Dezső Laky: *Csonka-Magyarország megszállásának közgazdasági kárai* (The economic damage resulting from the occupation of truncated Hungary). Budapest, 1923, p. 365.

temporary phenomena to the level of a constant practice. Of course, the capitalists never did get around to giving the workers' real representatives a hearing, even after it had become amply clear that nothing would succeed in deterring the organized working class from the social-democratic trade unions.

According to a summary in the *Szakszervezeti Értesítő* (Trade-union bulletin) the crux of the wage freeze was that the employers refused to negotiate wages with the workers. The wages were determined by the employers and if the workers expressed dissatisfaction with the decisions then they were branded subversives and bolsheviks.

The National Federation of Industrialists accepted the task of top leadership and it represented the general economic and social-policy interests of the industrialists. The operative, practical leadership of the economic class struggle of the bourgeoisie was taken over by the National Association of Hungarian Iron Works and Machine Factories during the early 1920's. One of the reports of the Trade Union Council concluded that the National Association of Hungarian Iron Works and Machine Factories was in charge of the wage policies of every employer in the nation. The foundations of the special situation of the Association were the economic clout of the respective industrial branch, its high level of organization and its smooth internal functioning. The Association's rulings on wages served as a guideline for the large and small industries belonging to that branch. There was also a black list system, of which we quote just one instance: in 1920 a "strictly confidential" circular called on the members to refuse employment to the workers who quit the Schlick and Nicholson factory because of a labour conflict.

In 1921 the Organization of the Wood Industry Labour Affairs was set up under the wood industry branch of the National Federation of Industrialists and it was modelled after the National Association of Hungarian Iron Works and Machine Factories. With a contract bristling with severe sanctions it obligated its members to adhere to the agreements concerning wages and it agreed to cooperate with the National Federation of Master Carpenters. In 1921 the executive committee of the Organization of the Wood Industry Labour Affairs worked out wage scales in an arbitrary manner because it claimed that it could not reach an agreement with the trade union.

It was not only in the area of wages that the employers wanted to exercise the meaning of their slogan – "In the plant the owner is the boss!" Indeed, since money was rapidly losing its value, in certain cases they were willing to grant concessions in the field of wages, at least more so than in the area of power and control.

In Hungary the trade-union movement had developed through the crafts and trades and they did not have locals in the factories and in the small workshops. Contact between the workers of a factory and the union of the respective trade was maintained by the shop stewards who were the trade unions' representatives at the place of work. In certain factories the workers had won recognition for the shop-steward system as early as the 1918 revolutionary upsurge, but this became

a general phenomenon only after the victory of the bourgeois democratic revolution, when it meant the employers' acceptance of the trade unions' direct presence in the factories. One of the most important goals of the bourgeoisie after the victory of the counter-revolution was the liquidation of this singular institution representing the workers' interests within the walls of the factories and workshops. According to the position of the leaders of the National Federation of Industrialists in May 1920 the return of the shop-steward system was undesirable in any form. At the same time, however, the employers of the printers were involved in negotiations with the respective union at the time and one of their foremost demands was for the right to veto the elected shop steward. That would have meant another election to choose another person all the way until someone was picked who was agreeable to the boss; i.e., the granting of such a right would have liquidated the essence of the shop-steward system's *raison d'être*.

The ruin of the shop-steward system or the lowering of the shop-steward status to one of a puppet of the employers would have freed the latter from supervision by the trade unions as to how manpower was chosen and utilized and the workload organized. These were vital practical everyday problems for the workers and the labour movement and the sources of many severe class conflicts.

The unilateral right to choose employees meant that the capitalists could fire whomever they did not like, which meant the militants, the shop stewards, the members of the leading organs of the trade union and those workers who were able and willing to formulate and to represent their fellow-workers' demands in the course of a wage struggle or some other movement. Although, as we have mentioned previously, the capitalists did not actively support the Christian-socialist and "nationalist" organizations, they were even less willing to tolerate that the organized workers would struggle against them. The right to freely employ workers belonging to any of the phony labour organizations was important for the employers not because they had large memberships or specialized, highly qualified skilled workers in their ranks, but because through this, even if only rarely, they seriously hurt the hegemony of the trade unions over job referrals, which was one of the most important achievements of the working-class movement and one of the main factors of its appeal. Depriving the representatives of the workers of the right to have a say in the organization and utilization of manpower meant unrestricted compulsory overtime and the placing of skilled workers in unskilled categories.

The strategic goals of the various ideas concerning how to handle the workers from the point of view of the ruling and middle classes were the same: exploit the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat and liquidate the modern trade-union mass movement in Hungary. Nevertheless, reflecting the different interests of the classes and strata, there were significant differences in their notions of method, tactics and labour and trade-union politics. The community of interest of the exploiting classes "consists solely in the maintenance of the *abstract* opportunity for oppression and exploitation. Real life exploitation necessarily brings them into conflict with each other", wrote György Lukács analysing the Hungarian

social und political situation in one of this articles published in the June 1920 issue of *Proletár*, a communist journal published in Vienna.

The bourgeoisie wanted a situation in which its interests would not be harmed by the realization of certain aspects of the agrarian economic policy nor by the possible partial successes of the welfare demands of the Christian-socialist and "nationalist" movements' demagoguery; furthermore, it wanted a situation whereby its freedom of action would not be restricted by state intervention. It wanted to liberate itself from the trade unions by "freeing" them of their basic functions.

The employers' thinking ran as follows: if they do not tolerate the union exercising its role in the economic class struggle, if the wage freeze becomes general, if the union is denied all say in the determining of wages, if all power is in the hands of the employers, and if the chosen representatives and the trade organizations of the workers are denied any kind of role in the employment of workers and in the organization and utilization of manpower, then the workers will probably not remain members of an organization which cannot achieve anything for them and thus the unions will become depopulated.

This means that the bourgeoisie favoured the tactic of the gradual withering away of the unions over the nationalization plans or the "syphoning" of the workers over into the Christian-socialist or "nationalist" organizations.

THE ORGANIZED WORKING CLASS AND THE NEW SITUATION

The differences of opinion among the ruling and middle classes and the difference in the attitudes and conduct between the central government and the local authorities were an advantage from the labour movement's point of view. It was an opportunity for manoeuvering and exploiting the contradictions. The internal contradictions of the class enemy had a not insignificant role in the fact that the unions not only survived, but, within a certain framework, could actually carry out effective work. Needless to say, this was a result that none of the groups within the ruling class had wanted.

The international balance of power, the economic situation, the politics of the ruling classes, particularly the bourgeoisie's, and the attitude of the authorities are all forces which create the objective conditions of the labour organizations' freedom of movement and have a key role in their development. It would be therefore an error to try to explain the successes and defeats of the labour movement only by analyzing the strength and weakness of the labour parties and the trade unions or the virtues, or lack of the same, of the leaders.

Yet, the working class was not a passive participant in the historical process. Even the fact that it was forced to surrender the dictatorship of the proletariat did not mean that after August 1919 the working class was reduced to a helpless mass swept along by events rife with anti-labour restrictions. Power was lost, but the experiences and lessons, which the proletariat had amassed in the course of

struggling for and then exercising power, remained, as did the heritage of the class struggle of several decades, which steeled the Hungarian working class into a fighting force capable of winning the revolutions of 1918 and 1919.

However, militant traditions and revolutionary experiences do not always lead to revolutionary actions. They are also key factors in the struggle of the working class to protect itself and its interests, since not only the international, domestic and economic situations determine how long a strategic retreat should last, what can be preserved or struggled for again, etc. but there are other factors present as well, such as the class consciousness of the workers, the political and organizational position of the labour movement, etc.

The politicians of the ruling and middle classes were generally wrong about the workers' consciousness and emotional state. On the one hand, they were afraid that the misery caused by the serious economic situation would lead to eruptions and rebellions and that the likely bursts of revolutionary activity internationally would find an echo in Hungary. Therefore, even after the revenge and mass-intimidation white-terror campaigns, there were sizeable police and military forces, the state of emergency was kept in force[7], and the law adopted in March 1921 "on the more effective preservation of order" placed the revolutionary workers' party outside of the law – although it did not say so as such, but its meaning was nevertheless unequivocal. On the other hand, however, the spokesmen and propagandists of the counter-revolutionary system assessed the disappointment, apathy, the exhaustion of the workers' fighting and revolutionary energies at the end of July and in early August 1919 as indicating a permanent turning away by the whole of the proletariat from all militant movements and as the workers' total disappointment in the doctrines of socialism. It seemed to these people that this truly tired and despondent working class would be ready to seek new alternatives and new ideas and that the workers could be persuaded to see a way out and new hope in anti-Semitism and nationalism.

Aside from the internal contradictions among the ruling classes and the middle strata, which gave rise to disagreements among them concerning tactics, something else that made it difficult to win the workers was that the concrete content and goals of the "Christian-nationalist idea" had never been formulated. One of the Ministers of the governing party stated at a closed meeting that the course of the time was not defined, nowhere was it elaborated. According to a leader of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, the party was constantly urged to adopt a national foundation, but no one could never explain just what they meant by that term.

The overwhelming majority of the organized workers just did not go for the confused nationalist propaganda being dished out. The "nationalist" concept, which before 1914 meant the demand for Hungary's total independence and the

[7] Law No. 63 of 1912 gave the government the right to by-pass Parliament in putting new legislation into effect in case of war. Decree No. 6 of 1920 extended this until July 26, 1922 and Decree No. 17 of 1922 even gave the government the right to restrict civil liberties indefinitely.

continued oppression of the various national minorities whose combined total formed the majority of the population, was always firmly rejected by those trade unions which were under the ideological guidance of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. As for the Hungarian Party of Communists, they were consistently on the side of internationalism.

As for the newfangled revisionist propaganda, which considered as the foremost "nationalist" task the restoration of so-called historical Hungary, which had been truncated by the Trianon Peace Treaty, it was still at the stage of trying to get its ideas and propaganda apparatus together during the early 1920's. The international isolation of the country, the bad economic scene and the internal political bickering all acted in disfavour of irredentism gaining any credibility and perspective, and its social influence, especially among the working classes, was still rather weak at the time.

The influence of anti-Semitism in the ranks of organized workers was only felt transitorily. The workers soon realized that as far as they were concerned, the various "purity of the race" gobbledygook would at the most only mean a change at the top, that one boss would be replaced by another, but by no means did it herald an end to their exploitation. One report summed up the workers' opinion as follows: "We cannot tolerate that instead of solving poverty by a tax on capital they are trying to bamboozle us with racism and blame everything on the Jews".

The majority of the workers of the factories quickly realized that the real aim of Christian-socialism as an ideology was do divert attention from the concrete social contradictions. In the rejection of Christian-socialism by the workers, aside from the boom lasting a few months which was characterized by the large number of membership books taken out in the Christian-socialist trade unions rather than by any concrete mass influence, a major role was played by the anti-clerical educational work carried out by the social-democratic labour organizations before the war and by the openly counter-revolutionary role of the Church during the period of the Republic of Councils. The workers regarded the Christian-socialist movement, according to a report of the time, as a political trap, even humbug, and many even said that it was the tactic of the counter-revolutionary government.

The organized workers rejected the basic content of the counter-revolutionary system's ideology, kept away from its organization, loathed the personalities of the regime and boycotted its newspapers and other rags. The following story affords us an insight into the mood of the workers of the time: a mechanic complained to the trade organizing committee because in the course of an argument one of his fellow workers called him a "Horthy lackey" and a "*Szózat* subscriber", which to him, as to all workers, was of course a serious case of slander.

In several factories the Christian-socialists were socially ostracized, who then either changed allegiances or jobs. Although, as we have mentioned before, the employers wanted to reserve for themselves the right to employ only whomever they wanted, they often backed down in face of the workers' ostracization of the

Christian-socialists. And if they ever got stubborn, as was the case at the end of 1921 in several large iron and machine industry factories, then the workers' objections against the employing of Christian-socialists became a massive strike movement.

A not insignificant role in the workers' hostile attitude towards the ideas and institutions of the fascist regime was played by the agitation of the illegally operating communist cells, one of the central slogans of which, according to the first communist pamphlet in December 1919, was: "Defend the trade unions and their unity!" The *Proletár*, which was secretly disseminated in Hungary too, published in September 1921 the position of the Executive Committee of the Comintern: "In terms of the work to be carried out among the proletarian masses... the trade unions are most important organizations for the political and organizing activities of the Hungarian Party of Communists." The fact that the Hungarian Party of Communists had as its direct aim a new socialist revolution and a second Republic of Councils simply failed to mobilize people. Although the majority of the proletariat were just overwhelmed with feelings of nostalgia for the days of the dictatorship of the proletariat, only a handful were willing to become involved in the illegal work, where there was the risk of death or "at least" lengthy stays in prison.

In the hallways of union offices or in the hidden corners of the factories the workers avidly read the leaflets signed "The Hungarian Party of Communists" and perhaps they thought about its contents, maybe even agreeing silently, but all tried to distance themselves from the dangerous pieces of paper because if they were seen with them, they and their families could easily get into trouble.

In other words, no collective demonstration of a revolutionary type was to be expected. A report by the Budapest police headquarters before May Day 1920 stated that most of the workers had no intentions whatsoever of participating in any open demonstration that looked dangerous. A month later the Miskolc area police authorities in charge of supervising the industrial district of Borsod county stated in a report that the masses were not particularly willing to join the communist movement under the given circumstances.

The consciousness and the emotional state of the organized workers were characterized during the early 1920's by a guardedness towards the directly political struggle led by the Hungarian Party of Communists. But that passivity was not apolitical, because there was the rejection of the Christian-national demagoguery and violence and there was also the workers' loyalty to the militant trade unions.

A great many workers were primarily interested in getting ahead money wise after having had to do without far too many things for seven or eight years and with no end in sight. "This very understandable ideology is easy to explain because it expresses the monetary interests of not so much the working class but of individual oppressed workers", wrote Béla Kun in one of his letters, going on to say that "this is precisely the type of worker whose roots so to speak are the deepest in the factory".

The wage freeze introduced by the employers drove a point home to the workers: if they wanted to live, to make a living just from their wages, then they had to fight for getting the best possible deal in return for their labour. But that struggle had definite political aspects, not only in the sense that every economic struggle was also a political one, but in the real sense of the word as well. Under the given situation in Hungary, the proletariat had to wage a day-to-day struggle to protect its right to act in its economic self-interest, to maintain the organizational framework and the political prerequisites necessary for the exercise of that right, because otherwise the workers were totally at the mercy of the whims of the employers and the authorities. The task of mobilization and leadership in this class struggle fell to the legally functioning trade unions and the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. The political demands and aims of the trade unions were expressed through the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, while in return, the trade unions provided the Party with a mass base. The political involvement of the social democrats prevented the trade unions from becoming exclusively trade unionist societies or welfare organizations of charity type and, on the other hand, the trade unions produced the financial and organizational prerequisites for the political existence of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. At the same time, the political activity of the trade-union movement gave the communists an opportunity to contribute to the militant content of these politics and to sow the seeds of a revolutionary line within the trade unions.

In Hungary it was only after the victory of the 1918 bourgeois democratic revolution that the Social Democratic Party of Hungary was able to establish a network of party locals throughout the nation. After the victory of the proletarian revolution in 1919, the unified party was based on that network and on the trade unions. In August 1919 the reorganizing congress of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the party's press repeatedly emphasized the significance which the reorganization of the independent party organizations had from the point of view of the party's nation-wide political influence and prestige. Even in the midst of the white terror, this reorganizing work was given a great impetus by the fact that the Social Democratic Party of Hungary attempted to participate in the January 1920 elections. In the course of the preparations, party organizations were set up in the electoral districts. However, the counter-revolutionary governments and troops used armed violence to curb the party's agitational and organizational activities, as a result of which the party's steering committee decided that the social-democratic ministers would withdraw from the coalition[8] government and that the Party would cease campaigning, adopting instead a stand of political passivity. Following this time, as the report of the Party

[8] Commissioned by the Supreme Council of the Paris Peace Conference, Sir George Clerk, a British diplomat, arrived in Budapest on October 23, 1919 with the purpose of setting up a government in which all of the important Hungarian political parties would be represented. As a result of the ensuing negotiations, on November 23 the cabinet list was announced with Károly Huszár, a Christian-socialist politician, as the president of the coalition government; the Social Democratic Party of Hungary was represented by Károly Peyer, as Secretary of State for Welfare and

leadership to the 1922 congress made clear, insurmountable obstacles blocked the functioning of the party organizations; party meetings were difficult to hold and at one time even simple meetings were just impossible. The electoral districts' party organizations continued to have a pro forma existence but their activities consisted of collecting membership dues and keeping the books up to date. Their stagnation is indicated by the fact that in 1920 and 1921 they only sent 24,000 *koronas* in to headquarters for each year in party dues, while the trades in Budapest alone contributed 320,000 and 435,000 *koronas* in those years respectively. The trade unions were a solid base for the labour movement not only financially but also organizationally, with a membership levelling off at 152,000 in 1920 and 1921.

The authorities did all that they could to hinder the activities of the trade unions. They forced the disbanding of the unions of the railway workers, tram operators, and municipal employees. They banned the meetings of the locals of the existing unions, occupied their premises, froze or confiscated their assets, banned their cultural programs, hampered the publication of trade journals and interned the activists. In comparing the rights of the employers and the workers, the Trade Union Council, in a petition to the Prime Minister in January 1921, concluded that for decades the workers had been complaining that they could not enjoy the rights of assembly and association to the same extent as their opponents, the employers who had the right to protect themselves even through dishonest means. It was not at all fair to allow a practice whereby the workers' associations were either denied all rights or could function only under very severe restrictions.

One of the sources of the strength and indestructibility of the trade union is that it is an extraordinarily versatile institution. Despite the persecution and attempts to stifle it, it keeps coming up for air and finds its way in one or another sphere of activity. In the course of 1920–1921 the *relief type* tasks became emphasized, which neither the employers nor the authorities were interested in doing. One of the first measures of the counter-revolutionary regime in August 1919 was to stop government assistance to the unemployed. As a result of the deprivation, malnourishment and lack of heating fuel, the health of the workers greatly deteriorated. In 1920 half a million sick people were receiving relief from the district funds and in 1921 this grew to 700,000. As a result of the war and the counter-revolutionary terror, the number of disabled, widows and orphans increased. In addition to the number of people slaughtered by the revenge campaign waged by the terror squads after the defeat of the Republic of Councils, many organized workers were put on trial and then were sent to prison or concentration camp. Their families remained without income and support. Only

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by Ferenc Miákits as Secretary of State for Commerce. After the social democrats left the coalition, the elections were held and on February 16, 1920 the National Assembly was convened, which on March 1st elected Miklós Horthy, the generalissimo of the counter-revolutionary so-called National Armed Forces, as pro tem Chief-of-state of Hungary with the title of Regent. The Huszár government resigned on the same day as part of the agreement.

those families had some hope who could afford the services of a lawyer, providing the victims were given a trial.

The workers and their families – not counting money from the sick relief fund for those who could not work due to illness – could only count on getting unemployment, sickness, disability, widows', orphans', emergency or legal aid funds, relief, or pensions as the case might be. For many working-class families this was the chief source of income, the only one. The workers rightly felt that in the hostile and cold society only their class brethren's organized solidarity could help them in their misery. Therefore, the relief services were also an emotional bond between the proletariat and the trade unions and they also served to strengthen the internal bonds of the workers as a class, by developing greater cohesion among them. The anniversary report of the shoemakers' movement stated that the various types of relief contributed greatly to the development of the trade society and its survival during hard times. The solidarity expressed in mutual support brought everyone involved closer together. In the midst of the harshest persecution it strengthened people's allegiance to the institution and helped to keep things going.

People were also brought together by the resumption of educationals in 1920. Many workers attended the lectures which fell outside of the restrictions placed on meetings and were thus an opportunity to get together and discuss not only the lectures but also their everyday problems.

The relationship of the workers and the trade unions went beyond the representation of economic interests, financial support and social intercourse; it also had, as we can see, a *political content.* The symbiosis of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the trade unions was not entirely free of polemics and conflict because to a certain extent both parties had a one-sided understanding of the relationship. In the unions' view the main task of the party was to ensure the most favourable conditions possible for the economic struggle, or, to use an often stated expression, to get "practical results" instead of "chasing after theoretical goals". According to this view the party's role at any political forum was to represent the workers' economic grievances and immediate demands. The leaders of the party, on the other hand, were of the mind that the role of the trade unions was to back the struggle for political ends by mobilizing the organized proletariat, or at least by giving moral support, as a sort of backup force which could be referred to, in contradistinction to the bourgeois parties which did not have mass organizations. The political leaders had a low opinion of the day-to-day economic problems of the workers and their grievances. They considered even the various individual cases of harassment on the part of the authorities against the trade unions to be just minor irritations which could not always be talked about and for which remedies could not be sought case by case.

The disagreements never did become antagonistic to the point of causing a split because both parties were aware of their mutual interdependence. In this context even the central organ of the ironworkers' trade-union, which was the strongest bastion of the trade unionist line, emphasized in March 1920 that they were not

opposed to the contact because they were convinced that a politically mature worker could only be a trade-union member and an educated trade-union member must also be a social democrat.

There was no disagreement between the two on the issue that the activities of the movement, regardless of which partner's interests were in the fore, must be guided by social-democratic ideological principles and political methods . They felt that this was something which should be emphasized because, as we have mentioned before, the rather influential groups of the ruling classes and the middle strata made either no distinction at all, or only very little, between the social democrats and the communists. The leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary felt that in the interest of the freedom of movement of the organization under their leadership they had to prove that there was no relationship, nor continuity between the reformist and the revolutionary trends and that this separation existed not only out of differences in methods and tactics between the two, but also because their principles negated one another and were mutually exclusive. "Social democracy has nothing to do with bolshevism. When bolshevism took over Hungary, the Social Democratic Party ceased to function. The day bolshevism died, the Social Democratic Party was reborn. These two ideologies cannot coexist. The life of one means the death of the other", wrote Ernő Garami in the October 2, 1919 issue of *Népszava*.

The *Népszava*, in order to win recognition and acceptance of the right of social democracy to be reborn, argued that the essence of the party's goals was one of gradual progress and the legal and humane methods of the class struggle.

Social democracy had not given up the idea of transforming Hungarian society but its goal was not the revolutionary overthrow of the existing order, but only its gradual transformation from within. The direct result of the reforms, according to the party documents, was to be a bourgeois democracy, while the classless society, although the realization of which remained a historical inevitability as an unavoidable concomitant of the irresistible development of the productive forces, was a long-term objective. The proletariat had to get ready, had to prepare itself to accord a proper welcome to the finally arriving socialism and then to take over the work of direction and management in every phase of society. However, a necessary prerequisite of this self-improvement effort on the part of the proletariat was the provision of the best possible job circumstances and the highest wages which always had to be struggled for with means that were the most appropriate to the given economic conditions of the time.

According to the leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, the Hungarian working class and its organizations had to participate in the reconstruction and in getting order and production back to normal because it was in their own interest. In a memorandum given to the British Embassy in Budapest, the social democrats stated that in the interest of the internal consolidation of the nation, the Social Democratic Party expressed its readiness to participate in the work of the reconstruction unconditionally, but it was most necessary to follow a policy of mutual understanding on the part of the ruling

powers as well. The policy of "we shall participate if allowed to do so" was one of the main themes of the party and trade-union press, of the petitions to the various state forums and of the proposed resolutions voiced at the few rallies that were allowed from time to time.

On the other hand, all manifestations also kept emphasizing that the organized working class was an independent socio-political force which was only willing to participate in the work of getting the nation back on its feet through its own organizations and under the direction of the social-democratic leaders. "Anyone who thinks that the organized working class can be split away from its leaders is very much mistaken", wrote Illés Mónus in the first issue of *Szociáldemokrata Röpiratok* (Social-democratic pamphlets) in 1919. To prove their right to leadership and their commitment, the social democrats warned the bourgeois politicians in confidential memoranda and at the occasional talks that they were the only ones who could prevent the workers from "turning left". They tried to convey the message that, given the balance of power within the working-class movement, the alternative was not between the social democrats and the Christian-socialist-"nationalists", but between the social democrats and the communists.

The leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and of the trade unions tried their best to get the more or less sober thinking politicians of the ruling classes to understand that the bloody terror campaign and unsparing dictatorship was simply not going to bring about the desired results as far as the workers were concerned. It was going to make an economic regeneration impossible and politically it necessitated a permanent state of siege which was not desirable from the ruling classes' point of view either. The only way to get a smooth solution to these contradictions was to recognize the trade unions. In July 1920 the *Népszava* had the following demand: "Return the trade unions to their original purpose and trust the membership of the unions to decide what direction and what legal means they consider appropriate for the defense of their interests." It said that the trade unions were tools of the class struggle because they represented the interests of the workers *as a class* against the employers, but they also ensured – and only they could pull this off – that the struggle would be kept within peaceful boundaries. The word "revolution" was just rhetoric in the life of the trade unions, their work was strictly evolutionary, explained one of the leaders of the trade unions in the February 17, 1920 issue of the *Népszava*.

In the spirit of the above-mentioned basic principles, the leaderships of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and of the trade unions were willing to adjust to the capitalist system which was in a process of reorganization after the victory of the counter-revolution, but their cooperation was made conditional on granting an independent position for organized labour and ensuring independence to its organizations based on social-democratic principles and proletarian class content.

The various Party and trade-union forums and publications repeatedly and uniformly formulated the concrete guarantees of the legal and legitimate

operation of the Party and the trade unions during the years 1919–1921. They demanded freedom of movement for the trade unions within the framework of the by-laws which were approved by the authorities, the right of the central office to communicate with the local organizations on an unrestricted basis, the lifting of the ban and all restrictions on the right of assembly, the vacation of the occupied offices, the return of the seized assets, and that permission be granted as soon as possible to the disbanded or suspended federations to start working again. In addition to seeking redress for specific trade-union grievances, the social-democratic leaders also considered it necessary that the state of emergency be called off, that negotiations be held about the question of suffrage, that the political parties' organizations be free to operate, and that an amnesty, freedom of the press and the colportage right of the social-democratic press be granted.

In other words, the social democrats wanted total and free access to the masses of workers in order to have a monopoly over directing the political and economic struggles of the working class. The proposals were aimed at getting the legal status of the social-democratic labour movement back to its pre-1914 state. The demands were a package, forming a cohesive platform, rather than questions of legal detail. In a broader sense, the content of the program sought recognition for the Party and the trade unions, together with their institutions and publications, as being necessary for the nation's political life because they represented one of the most important classes', the workers', interests.

This objective went beyond just trying to get back to the way things had been in 1914 because it also included things that were only won during the last two years of the war when the working-class movement, but particularly the trade-union movement, became much stronger. Furthermore, it wanted to get all this under the counter-revolutionary dictatorship. On the other hand, even if only temporarily, it nevertheless expressed the resignation of the social democrats and of the trade unions that the civil rights achievements of the 1918 bourgeois democratic revolution were lost.

ON THE ROAD OF COMPROMISE

With the above-discussed principles and demands, the social-democratic movement was prepared since the autumn of 1919 to come to terms with the people holding economic, political and state power. Of course, the leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the trade unions could only decide on what bases they themselves were willing to negotiate. They could not decide for the politicians of the ruling classes just when they should see the need for showing compliance and what forms the concessions which they would grant should take.

The wishes of the social democrats were practically in a diametrical opposition with the views of the racist agrarian politicians' labour and trade-union politics. As the counter-revolutionary system was consolidating its hold over the nation, the upper "middle class" and those landowners who sought to maintain the

supremacy of agriculture in the national economy had an increasingly tough time getting their way. They could not achieve any long-term results with their plans of a redistribution of wealth which would have been at the expense of the Jewish bourgeoisie, nor could they get a military dictatorship installed permanently, which would have run the country to their liking. The failure of their basic endeavours had a dual effect among the military officer–civil servant–intellectual strata who dominated the temporary instruments of oppression of the white terror.

The elements who were willing to subordinate the nationalist-anti-Semitic objectives to the interests of governing tried to find their niche, both politically and positionally, in some area of authority within the consolidating counter-revolutionary system. A numerically considerably smaller bunch continued to believe in the terrorist tactics of the fascist detachments and raid gangs. Sometimes there were news of uncovered assassination plots and adventurist putsch plans, but the outcome of it all was that in every way they lost their importance.

Of the labour and trade-union politics of the politicians and publicists belonging to the gentry middle class, only those aspects were adopted into the governing practice of the regime which coincided with the common interests of the ruling classes. An official strike-breaking organization was set up called the National Labour Protection Organization, which was made up of civil servants and university students and was mobilized in case of strikes at public utility companies.

Economic and political power remained solidly in the hands of the bourgeoisie and that part of the landowning class which had a vested interest in capitalist development, with the finance oligarchy at their head together with the allied aristocracy whose influence in government was on the rise by the second half of 1920. The wealthy classes demanded that a strong and stable government should consolidate the legitimacy of the counter-revolutionary system so that it could ensure the existence of the given class system, while at the same time allow for the normal functioning of economic and political life.

Regent Horthy appointed Count István Bethlen in July 1920 to direct the consolidation. However, due to the internal contradictions of the governing parties, Bethlen could only take over the post of Prime Minister from Count Pál Teleki in April 1921. Bethlen was chosen as being the best man for the job because he was able to represent the common interests of every class and stratum which had a stake in the maintenance of a social order based on exploitation, even if it meant hurting the particular causes of certain individual groups. He personified class order and he had no preconceived ideas aside from two chief general notions – protection of the private property of the capitalists and landowners and the revision of the country's borders. He figured that as long as these two things were achieved, the ruling classes and the middle strata and their every faction, etc. would find their own niche. As to the extent and timing, those were matters of everyday political tactics for him. Bethlen had often said that the times were not suitable for the domination of any one "pet theory" and he never

did become the prisoner of any such line. This made it possible for him to start with the concrete givens of the situation and to conduct himself accordingly. He adapted well, whatever the situation.

In the field of labour and trade-union politics too, Bethlen tended to pick his options free of wishful thinking and preconceived notions and choose from the realistic alternatives the one which was most suitable for advancing consolidation. Already in the autumn of 1920, when he was a candidate during the elections, in his program speech he mentioned the need for a "peace treaty" with the working class. In its October 17, 1920 issue, the *Népszava* welcomed the idea, saying that "though we feel that today even Bethlen's words are just a voice in the wilderness, their truth will eventually make way for itself because this country... wants to live and the only way to reach that goal is by breaking with the petty politics and striving for a more or less European level".

The fact that the leadership of the social democrats trusted in Bethlen was not without foundation. In his maiden speech as Prime Minister – although speaking only in broad generalities and carefully avoiding any real promises or even concrete reference to the nature and extent of the concessions to come – he talked about a "far-reaching understanding" of the working class and promised solutions which would satisfy the workers.

In other words, the leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the trade unions were no longer alone in their desire for some sort of agreement. Those groups and politicians of the ruling classes signalled a desire for partnership who were having more and more of a decisive say in developing the political profile of the counter-revolutionary regime once the officer–civil servant–intellectual strata's independent efforts to grab power had been thrust into the background.

One of the essential aspects of the consolidation was the gradually strengthening directing role of the central state civil service bodies as opposed to the military authorities and the rural administration authorities. This development increased the importance of the higher-level ministerial bureaucracy. The politics of the officers and bureaucrats running the military and the counties were generally characterized by a racist agrarian outlook. This was especially true in terms of their attitude toward the working class. However, the civil servants of the central state apparatus by that time were often from among the bourgeois intelligentsia. These people were followers of István Tisza's conservative-liberal politics which until the 1918 bourgeois revolution had been the hegemonic line of the capitalist-landowner state. This stratum had a broader understanding of both domestic and international developments.

In matters concerning labour and trade-union politics, the Ministries of the Interior, Commerce, and Welfare were the interested parties, as well as the social policy department set up in December 1920 under the Prime Minister's Office. The latter was not an administrative body, but rather a brain trust to advise on the government's labour and trade-union policies, i. e., it was ordained to work out policies for the state which would best represent the combined interests of all the

ruling classes. Secretary-of-state Pál Petri, the head of this outfit, said at the end of 1920 that by putting an end to the "bothersome influence" of the Ministry of Defense and the racist-nationalist organizations, his office would be in charge of finding solutions for problems related to the working class. As part of finding lasting solutions, although not ruling out the participation of the Christian-socialist and the "nationalist" organizations, he considered it necessary to get in touch with the leaders of the social democrats. Petri's successor, Zoltán Bencs, accepted this approach and in his reports to Teleki and later to Bethlen repeatedly opposed the view which equated bolshevism with social democracy. He paid close attention to the polarization going on among the working class and he was of the opinion that the Hungarian social democrats were following the "wise *Realpolitik* opportunism" of the West-European social-democratic parties which saw that the proletariat should not aim at the construction of a new social order, but at getting a higher standard of living, as close to the middle class as possible. "The outstanding factors in this social struggle are the workers' trade unions", wrote Bencs in one of his notes. "It would be an error to fail to recognize that these organizations not only do not want to break away from bourgeois society, but to the contrary, they are preparing the so-called proletariat to find its place peacefully and freely within it".

The social policy department of the Prime Minister's Office, presumably after consulting with the other state bodies involved, worked out concrete proposals concerning the guaranteeing of such work conditions for the trade unions and the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, which would make it possible for them to carry out the role the government assigned to them, namely, to bring about the "integration-adaptation" of the proletariat into the bourgeois social order. According to the proposals, the trade unions could only concern themselves with the economic problems of the workers and all political involvement would be off limits for them. The Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the trade unions were to be completely independent of each other both organizationally and financially. The unions were to purge the strike from their arsenal of weapons of the class struggle; in case of labour conflicts the decision of the arbitration committee to be set up under the aegis of the Ministry of Welfare, with an appointee of that Ministry as chairman, was to be final and binding on both the workers and the employers.

In return for accepting these conditions, the government offered to guarantee that the Social Democratic Party of Hungary could have the same freedom of movement as the other legal parties, that the trade unions could operate freely, although temporarily under very heavy supervision. The plan included a promise of an amnesty and an "impartial" press policy. In other words, in spring 1921 there was such a labour and trade-union policy worked out at the government level, which would basically guarantee the pre-1914 conditions for the working-class movement while rejecting the achievements of the 1918 revolutionary upsurge, not to speak of those of the two revolutions. At the same time it

also provided insurance – learning from the events of 1918 and 1919 – concerning the blocking of any growth of the political strength of the working class.

There were a number of signals at this time coming from the Bethlen government concerning a willingness to come to an agreement. In 1921 it granted the social democrats' request for permission to hold a May Day celebration; the Minister of the Interior gave permission to the trade unions to hold meetings, provided that only strictly economic matters would be up for discussion. On their part, the social-democratic leaders showed their loyalty to the Bethlen government in the course of the already mentioned October 1921 legitimist attempted coup, just like during the December 1921 plebiscite in Sopron, a town in Western Hungary.[9]

By the end of 1921 both parties felt that politically an agreement could no longer be postponed. The day – June 16, 1922 – was drawing near when according to the peace agreement the state of emergency would be lifted. Following that date, though on the basis of separate authorization from Parliament the government could keep certain measures in force, the entire problematics of the working-class movement could no longer be handled with the extraordinarily repressive means the government had used during the time of the state of emergency. Another factor hastening an agreement was that the mandate of the National Assembly, won in 1920, would come to an end in February of the following year, that is, that elections had to be held during the first half of 1922. The question of completing the political consolidation and enhancing the international prestige of the Bethlen government made it absolutely necessary that the Social Democratic Party of Hungary participate in those elections.

On its part, the leadership of the Party expressed its willingness to surrender its passivity, although in the absence of a comprehensive reform the resumption of active politicking was unthinkable. It was important for the trade unions, too, to gain as much freedom of action as possible.

In the second half of 1921 the introduction of the ban on imports and the rapidly growing inflation made their effect felt on industrial production.[10] The expectation of an economic boom placed in perspective the possibility of major struggles for better wages.

[9] On October 13, 1921 an agreement was reached in Venice between Hungary and Austria concerning Western Hungary. As part of the agreement, on December 14th and 15th a plebiscite was held in Sopron and its vicinity, the result of which indicated that the town wished to belong to Hungary.

[10] Starting in the summer of 1921, the Hungarian currency, the *korona*, was rapidly losing its value. As a result of the inflation, the capitalists could get huge credits, which were also declining in value, without the credits getting valorized. Thus they could make investments very cheaply, which resulted in boosting production.

As a result of the decline of the *korona*, the customs tariffs set up in 1906 became unsuitable for regulating imports. At the behest of the big capitalists, the Bethlen government banned the import of a significant portion of industrial finished products in the summer of 1921. As a result of the ban, there was a significant decline in the number of goods imported.

Between the 8th and the 21st of December 1921, negotiations were held between the government and the leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, as a result of which Prime Minister Bethlen and several of his Ministers signed a written agreement with Peyer and several other social-democrat leaders. According to the December 24th issue of the *Népszava*, the Party's steering committee, after a lengthy debate, accepted the leadership's report on the results of the talks on the basis of General Secretary István Farkas's report. On January 4, 1922, for the first time since January 1920 when it had adopted a passive stance, the Party held meetings for many of its district organizations at which the speakers reported on the negotiations with the government.

One of the functionaries of the Federation of Construction Workers wrote about this time to a Party secretary that neither party to the agreement might publicize the full measure of the conclusion of the talks. Right until November 1924 the leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary emphatically denied the existence of any *written* agreement. According to one of the speakers during the January 4, 1922 party meetings, there were only "discussions" between the government and the Party's leaders and even later on they only admitted to the fact of the negotiations, denying all along the written agreement that they were a party to.

The leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary wanted to hide from the working class the fact that they obligated themselves to certain domestic political restrictions, such as no pacts with the bourgeois liberal and democratic parties of the opposition, no republican propaganda, and no agitation among the agricultural workers such as there was after the 1918 bourgeois democratic revolution. Nor did the leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary tell the people that they accepted the government's decision that the trade unions of the civil servants, railway workers and post office employees could not be reestablished. Futhermore, the Party also agreed that they would publicly break all ties with those leaders of the Party who had fled into exile abroad and that they would struggle against them at forums abroad.

The leaders of the Party and of the trade unions were all the more vocal on the advantages of the outcome of the talks for the working class. Concerning the rights of assembly and association, it was agreed that while the police authorities would continue to have the right of supervision, the Party could hold regular meetings and by getting permission in advance, it could also hold political rallies indoors or in a closed area. Protest marches continued to be banned. The trade unions were not allowed to engage in politics, but they could carry out unhampered their activities as outlined in the approved by-laws and no advance permission was required for the holding of trade-union meetings, only notice was to be given to the authorities. The national federations were given permission to organize local groups in rural areas without separate by-laws after giving prior notice. Meetings at the place of work were also allowed as long as they were "free of politics". As mentioned before, the government also promised, among other things, a political amnesty, with the proviso – accepted by the social democrats

– that it reserved the right to intern all those people who were "dangerous communist agitators posing a grave danger to the security of the state".

The clauses which obliged the Party to use its international contacts to attempt to change the Trianon Peace Treaty and to refute the news concerning the white terror, thereby contributing to the strengthening of the regime's reputation internationally, were interpreted by the leaders of the Party as obligations appropriate to the interests of the Hungarian working class. However, it was amply obvious that keeping to the letter of this clause would have discredited the Party's line on internationalism.

The pact made it clear that the Social Democratic Party of Hungary was resigned to not being able to win back everything that it had had before August 1919. And for its part, the government was resigned to the legal operations of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, the trade unions and all other social-democratic led labour organizations which would conduct themselves in a reformist manner, as they had claimed and practised since the defeat of the Republic of Councils. Furthermore, the government would tolerate the Marxist way of expressing things concerning the political efforts of the working class and the assertion of the principle of the class interest of the workers in the leadership of their economic struggle.

It is not our task here to start analysing in detail what sort of effect the agreement between the government and the social democrats in 1921 had on the whole of the Hungarian working-class movement in the course of the following years. And we can only mention that the keeping of the written agreement a secret from the workers, the gradual leaking of its contents and then finally the publication of the pact years later caused a major storm in the movement's domestic public opinion and it even became an issue at international forums.

It is a fact that for the trade unions – aside from the areas that were declared off limits – the pact meant that they could organize and take up the economic struggle again. And such a legally operating trade-union movement was objectively a fundamental prerequisite for the effective illegal work of the Hungarian Party of Communists, since otherwise the revolutionary forces had only very narrow possibilities and scope for their agitation and organizing efforts. "It would also be useful from our point of view if the working class could, in some way, gain a framework for political expression even if it means just being allowed to stutter but not speak forthrightly. During this miserable crisis of the world revolution at least in the matter of freedom of movement something perhaps could have been achieved even in Hungary and perhaps there may have been something else to do rather than emigrate", wrote Kun when he assessed the tactics of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary in October 1921, during the days of the attempted legitimist coup.

The communists figured that the price was just too high that the social democrats, bargaining on behalf of the Hungarian working class, paid for the greater freedom of movement and they pointed out that the social democrats should have gone whole hog and demand total freedom of action, total amnesty,

and higher wages. The communists saw no guarantees whatsoever that Bethlen and his clique would of their own free will carry out their part of the bargain in matters that were to the advantage of the working class, nor did they expect that the social democrats would mobilize the workers to struggle and force the government to fulfill its promises.

But is was obvious that as far as it went, the pact itself provided more favourable – in terms of the period between 1919 and 1921 – opportunities for the working class, and the utilization of this situation depended on to what extent the masses of organized workers were moved into action.

The significance of the activity of the proletariat was proven by the fact that in the second National Assembly elections in the summer of 1922 there were twenty-four social-democrat candidates elected to Parliament, who had won nearly 290,000 votes in spite of the terror and dirty tricks. In the capital and vicinity, the party got 167,000 votes, indicating that the franchised working class supported it en masse. In that year the total membership of the trade unions surpassed the 200,000 mark, which was the peak during the entire twenty-five years of the counter-revolutionary rule.

The course of the class struggle of the following few years proved that the achievements of the working class during those years in its economic and political struggles were due not to the pact, but to the workers' militant determination and their capacity for struggle. At the same time, the defeats and weaknesses of the working-class movement were also not because of the pact, but on account of the objective socio-economic situation and also because the counter-revolutionary dictatorship made it impossible for a legal revolutionary mass party to be organized.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE ORGANIZED WORKING CLASS IN HUNGARY (1929–1933)

by

György Borsányi

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS IN HUNGARY

From the mid-1920's to the end of 1929 Hungary underwent a period of economic prosperity. The textile, electric energy, paper, chemical and food industries got well under way. The number of workers employed in industry was rising and by 1929 had passed the 600,000 mark.

Despite this upswing in development, when regarding Hungary in the European context, one must conclude that it was one of the backward, underdeveloped nations. The bulk of the national income originated with agriculture, which was low in productivity and poorly mechanized. The number of industrial workers totalled only 14.7 per cent of the population and most of them worked in small factories. The largest group on an occupation basis was the agrarian proletariat (23.3 per cent), that is, the poor peasants who worked on the large estates.

While industrial production was growing, the agricultural sector had serious problems marketing its produce. Starting in 1928 there were the signs of a crisis when the price of wheat, which was Hungary's major agricultural export item, fell. By 1932, at the height of the economic crisis, it fell to a quarter of its pre-depression price. As a result, the misery in the rural areas was truly catastrophic.

The shock waves of the Great Depression had quickly reached Hungary, too. There was a parallel drop in production; it started at the end of 1929 and hit the bottom in 1932. That was followed by a year of stagnation and then by a slow rise. The following data illustrate this:

Year	Number (in thousands) of workers employed in industry	Wages paid out (in million *pengős*) to industrial workers
1928	654	759
1929	578	696
1930	501	601
1931	389	508
1932	371	424
1933	419	414

The effect of the crisis was not felt uniformly in the various industrial branches. The average drop in Hungary's industrial production was 25 per cent, with iron and steel production falling to 18 per cent of the 1928 level and that of agricultural machinery to 21.5 per cent of the same level. The machine industry was producing at below 50 per cent of its 1928 rate. On the other hand, the textile industry, certain branches of the chemical industry, and the paper industry actually increased their production, mainly as a result of the drop in imports.

The decrease in production was, of course, accompanied by dismissals, i.e., by a growth in the number of unemployed. As the bosses reorganized production and demanded even more from the individual worker, the number of employed decreased more than production. Industrial unemployment approximately went something like this:

1929	75,000
1930	136,000
1931	178,000
1932	238,000
1933	234,000

A full third of Hungary's industrial workers were out of a job at the height of the depression. And when we consider how unemployment really hit the working class, i.e., go beyond the figures and see how some of the unemployed managed to find work for brief periods which meant that somebody else was out on the street during that time, we can safely conclude that there was hardly a proletariat family in all of Hungary which had not been directly affected. Unemployment was by far the greatest problem of the workers, all the more so since even during the boom period wages were too low to permit any sort of adequate savings.

There was no government unemployment insurance or welfare schemes of any kind in Hungary. Those in trouble had no state institution to turn to for help. The government threw the problem into the laps of the municipalities and townships which sought various charity arrangements. Needless to say, the means available differed from area to area. The extent of welfare assistance granted (on a charity basis) was also dependent upon what kind of pressure the unemployed, with or without the unions, were able to bring to bear upon the city fathers. For example, the city of Budapest, during the winter of 1931–1932, assisted unemployed families to the extent of 13 *fillérs* per person per day, which was then the equivalent of the price of 300 grams of bread. In the town of Pécs an unemployed worker could look forward to 10–15 days of casual labour. In Debrecen, another major town, this was only 6 days. Most towns set up some sort of relief kitchen where the unemployed, in the company of beggars, disabled and other casualties of society, could get some food once a day. The churches organized so-called " for the relief of misery" drives. Once a year, under the sponsorship of the Regent's wife, they organized collections of clothing for the poor proletarian children, calling upon the wealthy citizenry to contribute their children's worn, outgrown, or just boring clothing items as a Christmas present to the unemployed families.

THE TRADE UNIONS DURING THE YEARS OF THE DEPRESSION

During the period under review the most important class organization of the working class was the trade union. The situation of the trade-union movement under the Horthy regime can by no means be compared to that of its counterparts in countries under bourgeois democratic rule. In the latter the political parties or the working class enjoyed a relative freedom of movement and the social-democratic parties were often in positions of state power. The trade unions in those countries were primarily involved in economic activities and in the protection of the workers' interests. In Hungary, on the other hand, even the Social Democratic Party of Hungary was placed under restrictions and the Hungarian Party of Communists was outlawed and had to function underground, under heavy persecution. The Hungarian trade unions had to carry out tasks which elsewhere were done by the labour parties. Furthermore, we must also point out that although the trade unions were not outlawed, they were subject to constant pressure and harassment by the authorities. Thus, under those circumstances membership in a union was tantamount to a type of political stand and a demonstration of opposition to the regime. This was the way that the workers looked at it, as indeed did the authorities.

It is clear from the foregoing that the unions were not simply the usual sort of interest protecting bodies but political and cultural organizations of primary importance for the workers. Their influence spread pretty well to all of the working class, that is, it affected even those who were not members.

In this period, what we call the trade unions were under the leadership of the social democrats and banded together in the Trade Union Council. There were other workers' organizations which belonged to different political persuasions, but they were insignificant both in terms of memberships and influence. (The membership of the Christian-socialist organization was not even one tenth as large as the social-democratic one despite the fact that in certain factories the workers were forced to join.) In instances when the workers had an opportunity to make their political views felt – e. g., the election of the leadership of the Social Security Office –, the trade-union nominees had an 80–82 per cent majority.

During the period under review, the Trade Union Council had thirty-five trade organizations with a total of 110,000 members. In order to gain a proper appreciation of these statistics, we must consider the following facts:

1. for certain major groups of the working class all forms of organizing were banned;

2. membership in a union could not be taken out by those under eighteen years of age;

3. the trade unions also had people within their ranks who were not part of the working class as such, e. g., clerks in private firms, musicians, caretakers, etc.

All considered, we can conclude that approximately 13 per cent of the organizable workers were union members. It should be added that it was

primarily the skilled workers and of them mainly those working either in the capital or in the few other large industrial centres, who were organized. The degree and extent of organization differed from trade to trade. The most highly organized group were the printers with a nearly 100 per cent membership. Also well organized, with 50–60 per cent membership, were the ironworkers, cobblers, construction workers, tailors, woodworkers and the clerks of private firms. The most poorly organized trades included the textile and chemical industry workers as well as the miners (not to mention those where organizing was illegal, such as the railroad workers, mailmen, the employees of government-owned factories and public employees).

Among the thirty-five trade organizations there were some which had only a few hundred members (e.g., confectioners and those working with precious metals) while others had memberships of several thousands. The seven largest trade unions, in order of size, were as follows: the iron, construction and woodworkers', the printers', that of the employees of private firms, the leather workers' and the tailors'. Their combined membership was fifty-seven thousand people.

In terms of its membership, its history and its political clout, the Central Federation of Iron and Metal Workers was the most significant organization. Its membership at that time was over the twenty thousand mark. It owned considerable property and had a union hall in Budapest with the largest auditorium at the disposal of the trade-union movement. (The congresses of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary were usually held there.) The best known leaders of the social democrats came out of this union, men like Károly Peyer, Vilmos Böhm, Ernő Garami, Antal Dovcsák. There were several Members of Parliament among its leaders too – Lajos Kabók, János Esztergályos, Ferenc Bárdos. It had a good job referral system and in some Budapest factories it had a practical monopoly on the situation. It had a sports club that was of national rank and it conducted some high-calibre cultural activities, too. It had locals in Győr, Miskolc and other similar industrial centres.

The leadership of the Federation belonged to the right-wing social democrats; the communists had illegal cells within the Federation. Upon discovery, all participants of the cell were expelled from the union, if not in fact passed over to the police.

The situation was quite different in the National Federation of Hungarian Construction Workers. This organization had a great revolutionary past as the construction workers were always among the most radical wing of the Hungarian labour movement. Such were, for example, Dezső Bokányi, a legendary figure of the early century socialist movement who was living in Moscow at the time as a communist emigré, Sándor Garbai who was the President of the Revolutionary Governing Council in 1919, István Vági who in 1925 founded the Socialist Workers' Party of Hungary, a cover organization for the Hungarian Party of Communists. The construction workers' federation had around eighteen thousand members in the early 1920's. However, a later, eventually disastrous

undertaking, led the Federation into bankruptcy[1], which gave rise to a serious internal conflict that led to mass defections. As a result, the membership dropped to seven thousand. Communists and sympathizers throughout occupied positions of influence in the Federation.

The mainstay of the National Federation of Leather Industry Workers was made up of the shoemakers. The communist-led left wing became the majority in the mid-twenties in the shoemakers' section of the Federation. This led the leaders of the Trade Union Council to the unconstitutional move of expelling the leadership of that section. The membership of the Federation dropped to three thousand when some four thousand workers left following the expulsion and only a part of them returned later. The organization was famous for its discipline and the exceptionally successful tactics it used in the economic struggles, which were also employed to advantage in strikes during the Depression.

As already mentioned, the printers' union had the highest ratio of organized workers, the outcome of lengthy struggles. The printers had won the right to handle their own job referrals exclusively and in most print shops there were only union members working. The printers strictly supervised their colletive agreements which regulated wages, workhours and social benefit allocations. (Due to this, it was here that wages were the highest.) Relative to its membership, between six and seven thousand, this union was the wealthiest. Its strike fund was large enough to keep even a several months long struggle going and it could also provide its unemployed members with a fairly decent income.

The so-called "Light" group[2] and the opposition group associated with the name of Ernő Garami[3] were both very influential among the printers during the period presently under review. This opposition, however, was only concerned with certain tactical questions and never led to open conflict with the Peyer clique.

Of the more significant trade federations we should also mention the woodworkers' and the tailors'. There was a strong left-wing opposition in the federations of both of these trades, just as by itself was the National Federation of Employees of Private Firms, with its membership between five and six thousand. This organization may be regarded as the most significant gathering of

[1] In order to turn a profit on its cash resources the Federation started a stonemason and stonecutter cooperative in 1925, called 'Foundation Stone'. By the end of 1928 the cooperative was bankrupt thanks to poor management and the debts siphoned off all of the union's money, including the relief and disabled funds. Getting the Federation back on its economic feet required the aid of the other unions, and in fact a loan was obtained from the German construction workers' union.

[2] The "Light" group was founded by the centrist social-democrat leaders, Zsigmond Kunfi, Vilmos Böhm and Zoltán Rónai, who had gone to Vienna after the defeat of the Republic of Councils. The group was opposed to the communists but at the same time condemned the right-wing social-democrat party leadership for bargaining with the Horthy regime. They published the journal *Világosság* (Light). Böhm became the leader of the group after Kunfi's death in 1929.

[3] Ernő Garami was a right-wing social-democrat leader, but on a number of issues he failed to see eye to eye with the Peyerist leadership. An emigré,until 1929 when he returned and became a member of the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. He called for a boycott of Parliament by the Party and for efforts to be directed at mobilizing the masses. His views were rejected and in 1931 he resigned from the leadership.

intellectuals allied with the labour movement. Some of its outstanding leaders were people like Anna Kéthly, Miklós Kertész and Dr. Imre Györki.

With the single exception of the ironworkers' union, the backbone of the Hungarian trade-union movement was made up of the workers of small-industry trades. This was partly due to the overall structure of Hungarian industry, since at that time two thirds of the workers were in shops which employed less than twenty people. Also, in two important areas, in the textile industry and in mining, labour organization was below average. In the textile industry this was due to the fact that most of the workers were women and since the whole of that industry itself was young, having really got underway only in the 1920's, the employees were mainly with low levels of training and education and they were new to the entire job scene lacking any experience or contact with the labour movement. Of course, this cannot be said in the case of the miners. Their organization was still strong in the wake of the defeat of the Republic of Councils when some seventy per cent of the miners were organized, which meant eighteen thousand men in the union. It had a revolutionary leadership which strongly opposed the reformists of the Trade Union Council. However, the latter managed to gradually disorganize the miners' union in the course of the twenties and to make it impossible for them to function. Consequently, by the time of the outbreak of the economic crisis, the union had lost all of its members who harboured revolutionary sentiments and its roll was reduced to nineteen hundred men, practically all of whom came out of the pits around Pécs, a major town in southern Hungary.

Regardless of the extent or degree of being organized, that is, even for those workers who were very poorly organized, the union was the main body around which the workers could rally and on which they could pin their hopes for an improvement of their lot and for leadership in their struggle. This circumstance gave the unions ample opportunity to lead the working masses into struggle and, at the same time, it meant the shouldering of an immense responsibility.

THE STRUGGLE OF THE UNIONS AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT

Fighting unemployment was nothing new to the trade-union movement. The social democrats and the unions had long been calling for legislation on the matter which would provide for adequate relief for those out of work. In 1924 the social-democratic caucus of Parliament took before the House a bill concerning this issue. However, even this mild proposal which amply considered the state's budget, only had the capitalists and their political lackeys frothing at the mouth in anger and thus the question of unemployment was taken off the agenda once and for all. According to the Minister for Trade and Commerce, such an insurance scheme would have meant only a one per cent increase in production costs, but the capitalists opted for the political tensions arising out of having hundreds of thousands of workers out on the street rather than concur with it as a precedent for financial contribution.

In order to decrease the number of unemployed, the government and the unions both favoured emigration and an early version of what is today called guest worker or migrant labour as a solution. In the summer of 1929 the Minister of the Interior addressed a circular to all county sub-prefects informing them that in France and Belgium there were openings in certain job categories and, furthermore, that getting the unemployed to work abroad was in the interest of state security. It was in the wake of this circular that 169 former workers of the Silk Factory of Sárvár moved to France. The unions themselves took an active hand in organizing the emigration. During the same summer the National Federation of Hungarian Construction Workers got in touch with the French Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) about getting jobs for six thousand Hungarian construction workers in France. However, the question came to nought since before the matter could be realized the crisis had hit the French construction industry. There were a few jobs for miners in France and Belgium, but none of these amounted to anything of significance by way of easing the unemployment situation.

By the autumn of 1929 the unions had got fully behind the struggle against unemployment. It was started by the construction workers' federation, at the initiative of the communists. Its reformist leaders agreed that the issue should be raised and no one thought that nothing should be done, but the question was how to go about it. The union leaders favoured traditional means of protest – meetings, press campaign, interpellations in Parliament – while the union opposition demanded more radical actions.

The move by the construction workers was in line with what the communist leadership was trying to do, that is, to be in contact with as many workers as possible. In November 1929 the communists in the construction workers' union set up a committee to organize the struggle against unemployment. The committee got in contact with the unemployed of other trades and soon the National Committee of the Unemployed was established.

In most cases the unemployment committees were under communist leadership and had a semi-legal existence. Their relationship with the trade unions was somewhat contradictory. The contradictions between the social democrats and the communists had a role to play in this. The setting up of these committees had actually meant that the communists wanted to take the struggle against unemployment out of the hands of the unions, in fact they were quite open about this. From another aspect, however, these committees were meant to be the start of a united front, organized from below to bring communists, social democrats and workers of other political persuasions together in the day-to-day struggle on matters directly affecting them. Unemployment was just the right kind of umbrella issue. But, and herein lies the contradiction, the committees needed the legal framework that the unions provided and could not risk the possible loss of union support.

In retrospect the contradiction was not nearly as acute as one may be led to think by the tone of the newspaper articles and leaflets of the time. A great deal

depended upon the local leadership and on the relationship between the communist and social-democrat workers and the trade-union functionaries. In many unions, especially which had a strong communist opposition, there was all-round cooperation and the unions eyen provided office space for the unemployment committees.

The National Committee of the Unemployed organized several demonstrations against unemployment. The streets of Budapest resounded with the demands for work and bread during the winter of 1929–1930. On January 26, 1930 demonstrators clashed with the police in the capital, and rural towns, too, had their share of demonstrations. The growing strength of this movement led the Social Democratic Party of Hungary to increase its activity in this field. By that time it had become obvious that the hitherto employed means were simply inadequate; one only had to take a look at the state of the negotiations between the government, the employers and the workers' representatives, which started in early 1930. On February 12th, Károly Peyer spoke in Parliament on the need for unemployment insurance legislation. In his reply, Prime Minister Bethlen pointed out that the government wished to review the matter and sought negotiations with representatives of the interested parties. The first talks took place on the 12th of March, with the Prime Minister and the ministers for welfare and trade and commerce, the leaders of organizations representing employers and big capitalists, and the leaders of the Trade Union Council and of the major unions being present.

It became very clear, however, that the willingness indicated by the government to negotiate was only a simple political public relations job, with nothing solid behind it. The talks stretched over months, convincing the leaders of the unions that no solutions were to be expected from this approach. All illusions about the government's possible social conscience were finally shattered.

In the meantime the communist-led actions of the unemployed continued. Demonstrations became more frequent and reprisals more violent. The police started using handguns in addition to their swords. There were many working and unemployed union members among the demonstrators and in some cases the leadership of locals participated in organizing the protest. Clearly, these were circumstances which the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary could not afford to neglect.

On June 1, 1930, a Sunday forenoon, the social-democratic Members of Parliament held a meeting to report to their constituents. This was attended by an unusually great number of people, some twenty-five thousand. The mood was more militant than ever. The speakers, sensing this, did not want to lag behind the crowd. The June 6th issue of *Népszava* (People's word), in an article on the meeting, quoted Peyer as having said that "This rally is the last warning we're giving the government. We're not going to have these any more to protest unemployment, just let them take heed: work as if there was a flood coming".

If there were not going to be any more protest rallies, what was going to take their place? Although not giving a straight answer, Peyer did drop a clear hint:

Neither did the miners of Salgótarján have jobs, that is, not until they started to march on the capital. This statement was the overture to what occurred on September 1, 1930, which was the day of the largest political demonstration during the quarter century of Horthy fascism.

The steering committee of the Trade Union Council held a meeting on the 11th of August. According to an article in the *Népszava* on the following day, Peyer spoke in the same vein as at the June rally. He said that the meetings, delegations, negotiations and proposals in Parliament had all been in vain. The government would not act in favour of the unemployed unless forced. He went on to say that "In the name of the leadership of the Trade Union Council, I propose that no more protest rallies be held, but that we set a date on which employed and unemployed workers, in the capital and in the country in general, will go out into the streets and express the dissatisfaction and desperation felt by those out of work... I propose that the 1st of September be that day". This proposal was unanimously accepted by the steering committee.

In the planning and execution of the plan the leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and of the unions were guided by a number of considerations. The primary aspect was the need to maintain and, if possible increase, their own popularity. After all the sterile and aimless speeches in Parliament, the articles and promises, something concrete had to be done which would show the people that the Social Democratic Party was indeed *their* party, which could not only speak but also act on their behalf.

The second consideration was the need for a show of strength which the government would notice. Since the government showed that it could not care less for the opinions and proposals of the social democrats, people started to believe that the party was just a political lightweight. In other words, not only the government but the population at large had to be convinced that just the opposite was the case.

Another aspect that the steering committee had to consider was the need to strengthen the Hungarian position in the Socialist Workers' International. Ever since the Bethlen–Peyer pact[4], the International regarded the Social Democratic Party of Hungary as one which is to the political right of what is "generally acceptable". This was a source of repeated embarrassment to Peyer and his group, who were getting "flak" not only from the "Light" people, but from the Czech and Romanian fraternal parties as well. Consequently, great hopes were pinned on having a successful monster demonstration which would lend the Hungarian social democrats a more "with it" image.

Plans were repeatedly changed. At first the party asked for a rally permit, which the police refused. Then it was to be a protest march, and eventually it became a "silent walk through the streets". Although this last proposal was also

[4] This refers to the agreement concluded between the leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the Bethlen government. See the study by Peter Sipos in this volume.

rejected by the police, it was obvious that such a form of protest was impossible to prevent.

September 1, 1930 was a clear Monday. Well before the appointed hour pedestrian traffic was getting unusually heavy along the appointed route, which was along the most beautiful and widest boulevard of Budapest. The government ordered out the police and the army, and several battalions of gendarmes were called up to the capital from the rural districts to reinforce the local police. The mounted police and the armoured cars of the army were placed on stand-by alert. Ever since the early morning policemen on foot and on horses covered the area. The social-democratic leaders themselves took measures to ensure that it would be a peaceful demonstration. The parade marshals were prepared to intervene and calm the crowd and, if necessary, to remove the "trouble makers". All the more so, as contrary to the social democrats, the Hungarian Party of Communists had called on the workers to make this a militant demonstration. The communists took certain measures, such as getting coal and stone piles to the vicinity, which would be handy in street fighting, but which were inadequate given the armed force of the police.

Hardly had the march begun when it was more than clear that given the mood of the people a peaceful silent stroll was out of the question. Folks were still straggling when a group of young workers already clashed with the police. By eleven a. m. traffic was brought to a dead stop and people flooded the whole of the street. For the first time since 1919 the banned anthem of the international workers' movement, *The International*, was sung openly in the streets of Budapest. The crowd broke into smaller lots and listened to the offhand speeches of communists. The policemen who were on foot were simply swept away by the crowd. Organized groups of communist youth shouted in unison: "Work! Bread! Down with Horthy! Down with Bethlen! Long live the Republic of Councils!" The crowd took up the chant and the din filled the streets.

Suddenly the mounted police charged into the crowd from one of the side streets. Soon screams, curses and the sirens of ambulance cars mixed with the rhythmically shouted slogans and workers' songs. The people fought back. Using the chairs and marble-top tables of a restaurant and by tearing up the cobblestones they built barricades. The horsemen were showered with stones and pieces of coal. The police opened fire and one worker died, which, of course, was just fuel for the fire. A parked car was set on fire, tram cars were overturned and the plate glass windows of cafés were smashed. The fighting was not just along the planned route of the march, for one thing there were far too many people present. The violence covered approximately a mile area, namely the busiest streets of the city and the vicinities of the two central railway stations. The number of wounded was over four hundred.

The police could not cope with the crowd. Only the army, with the use of armoured cars, could restore order during the afternoon.

There were demonstrations held in every rural town as well during the same time but nowhere did events like in the capital occur. Counting every instance of

protest on that day, some quarter of a million people participated nation wide and this was the largest demonstration of the Hungarian working class during the years of the Horthy regime. Considering its mood, intensity and means it was a revolutionary action which even on an international scale held its own well as one of the largest manifestations of protest of the era. It deserved the attention focused on it by both wings of the international working-class movement. It indicated that after a decade of counter-revolutionary rule the masses were ready to take a militant stand for their rights and to even risk their lives in opposing the regime. The fact that many of those present were shouting communist slogans and answered the call of the Hungarian Party of Communists proved that in spite of the constant persecution, the illegal Party was nevertheless a significant political force in the country.

The demonstration went a long way towards increasing the prestige of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary among the organized workers and it also had a profound effect on the bystanders. It was clear that of all the political parties the social democrats were the ones who could get the most number of people out into the streets, a fact that lent them increased political weight in the eyes of government circles.

The course of events on September 1st surprised the leaders of the social democrats as well. Not only did they not anticipate violence, guns and bloodshed, they did not even expect people to turn out in such numbers. Since they only aimed at an immediate effect, i.e., a show of strength, they had no plans for continuing the struggle, indeed, they did not even know how to capitalize on this political windfall. This type of protest and street battles with the police were quite the opposite of the social democrats' approach so far and neither were they interested in changing their stand; after the demonstration they strived to get the movement back into its former non-violent straitjacket.

The February 1931 extraordinary trade-union congress reflected this endeavour. It was convened to discuss merely the struggle against unemployment. Peyer was the main speaker. He said that at the beginning of the year there were 150,000 unemployed industrial workers and 300,000 unemployed agricultural labourers, which came to about a million people with family members considered who were thrust into a hopeless and bleak existence. Speaker after speaker described the dismal situation faced by the workers of each trade. The congress repeated the earlier demands of the unions: initiation of a public works program, legislation on the 48-hour work week, unemployment insurance and a once only emergency allowance. It called for a stop to the evictions and for a major comprehensive economic plan which would create job opportunities.

The congress and its resolutions were discussed at meetings held by the various unions. The prevailing mood at these meetings was quite despondent. The woodworkers argued in favour of another demonstration like the one on September 1st, but the union bosses rejected this, pointing out that "the return to the framework of legality" was a historical necessity; in short, it was obvious that they wanted to tone down and to disarm the movement.

This did not mean, however, that the movement of the unemployed was over. It continued partly under communist leadership and partly of its own momentum. Given the element of spontaneity in the movement it was not surprising that certain anarchist features were also present, such as raids on food stores and fuel depots. A vicious circle fast ensued: the Social Democratic Party of Hungary did not support the unemployed because their tactics "alienate people" and the unemployed became ever more desperate in their actions as party support for them dwindled.

In the autumn of 1931 the leaders of the unions started negotiations with the new Prime Minister, Count Gyula Károlyi, on aid for the unemployed. The only result of the talks was that those unemployed who were union members would no longer have to go to the municipality-run relief kitchens, which, like all such canteens anywhere in the world, were totally demeaning and an insult to human dignity, but they would get their portion in cash, which was a pathetically low amount. It meant five *pengős* per month for a union member out of work, which was the equivalent of approximately four kilograms of sugar or twelve kilograms of bread.

Nevertheless, this caused a huge outcry in bourgeois circles. The ruling party itself opposed the Prime Minister and the Minister of Welfare and only narrowly was a government crisis averted. The loudest voices belonged to the liberal opposition, which was otherwise the closest to the social democrats.

The Prime Minister, who was otherwise strongly right wing, expressly anti-labour and a representative of the most conservative circles of big capital, was placed in a position of having to explain himself before his own party and the opposition Members of Parliament of the so-called "Left". Thus it was hardly surprising that he soon reneged on the agreement. According to him the agreement did not work out in practice. "The results were just the opposite of what the government had hoped for. We have received countless reports to the effect that people who had hitherto been willing to work for their dole and thus contributed to the overcoming of the problem now had refused to work because unemployed union members receive assistance without working for it. Therefore, the government feels compelled to terminate this form of relief".[5]

The Social Democratic Party of Hungary could not afford to just idly watch this turn in events since it was a move directly injurious to the interests of the organized workers who could not accept being treated like "the pet charities of do-gooder little ol' ladies" – to quote a *Népszava* editorial. Therefore, the December 11th meeting of the Trade Union Council's steering committee agreed to organize a protest rally of the unemployed on the 17th of the same month at one of the squares of the capital.

Preparations for the demonstration made it once again quite obvious just how much such militancy goes against the grain among the social democrats' leading functionaries. Press announcements were modest both in tone and in the amount

[5] *Kéviselőházi napló* (Minutes of the sessions of Parliament). 1931, Vol. II, p. 226.

of space bought. A person had to be a complete political neophyte not to see that the party had no desire whatsoever to demonstrate and that it only gave in under duress. The government and the police had an understanding attitude. There were no panicky, worry and doom laden articles in the bourgeois press. In fact, there was a blanket of silence covering the planned demonstration.

To say that the December 11th rally did not become an event of national significance under these circumstances will not surprise the reader. The chief-of-police banned it and the Social Democratic Party of Hungary acquiesced. Nevertheless, some ten thousand unemployed convened in the square, yet there was not a single personality from the Social Democratic Party of Hungary willing to try and rally the milling crowd, address them and defy the police. The follow-up article in *Népszava* was more like something in the Salvation Army's paper, choking with pity for the plight of the unemployed, who were not only poor but got maltreated by the police as well.

This non-event demonstration was the last instance during the years of the depression that the Social Democratic Party of Hungary risked – even though it later retreated – calling the people out into the streets to protest unemployment. In subsequent years the leaders of the party and of the unions strived to avoid confrontations with the authorities, to keep the demands of the unemployed within peaceful, legal limits and to stave off all militancy. Their rationale for this conduct was the growing repression and the general anti-labour offensive that followed the inauguration of the Gyula Gömbös government in October 1932. In other words, activities protesting unemployment during 1932 and 1933 did not involve the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the unions.

ECONOMIC STRUGGLES DURING THE DEPRESSION

The economic crisis did not only mean layoffs, those who still had jobs also felt its effects. In addition to unemployment, there were two basic ways in which capital tried to minimize the effects of the crisis upon itself: wage drops and speedups. Essentially, these were two sides of the same coin, i.e., the workers were working more for less money. As usual, the move met the heated resistance of the workers, the cardinal expression of which was the strike.

During the time of an economic slump a strike is immeasurably more problematic than during boom periods. For one thing, masses of unemployed are literally outside the factory gates and many of them are only too willing to scab. Furthermore, the risk of a lock out, always present in any case, is considerably greater.

Nevertheless, there were strikes taking place and some of them ended in victory for the workers. There were several reasons for this, the primary one being the *unevenness of the crisis*. While there was a general decline in production there were always certain branches of industry which managed to increase their outputs (e.g., the textile industry and electrical energy production). Furthermore, within

certain branches of industry there were some factories where the situation did not reflect the general trend. And even factories which were hard hit were sometimes given a major and rush order which necessitated maximum exploitation of the plant's capacity.

Another factor was the workers with special training and long time service at the same plant. They could not be changed overnight, or replaced by bringing in the unemployed who were unfamiliar with the factory's technology off the streets. Although there were instances of mass dismissals, they were only a means of blackmailing the workers. The fact that the *workers were organized* was of great significance. Where the majority of the workers were organized it was possible to win a strike even if the factory was in dire straits economically.

The strikes during the depression, like earlier ones, were generally conducted under the leadership of the respective union. The attitude of the social-democratic led unions was one of extreme caution and a certain type of narrow "economism" when it came to strikes. They were very much afraid of possible failure and tried to avoid the strikes by going for negotiations wherever possible. They feared for the union's funds which a lengthier strike could exhaust. They were especially worried about the likelihood of having to support strikers who were not union members. However, once a strike organized by them became inevitable, they were willing to lead and see it to the end, doing their best to squeeze a victory out of it.

The struggle for better wages took place under very different circumstances among the various industrial branches during the years of the depression.

As mentioned before, the machine industry was one of the branches struck the hardest by the crisis. In Hungary the Bedeaux system, which was one of the extreme forms of capitalist reorganization, was first introduced in this industry. The advantage of this system from the capitalists' point of view lay in the fact that productivity was raised through the employ of speedups without increasing the fixed capital, which meant huge savings in wages. This system was widely applied in the USA and later in Western Europe during the 1920's.

The first factory in Hungary to make use of this system was the Ganz Works, one of the largest at the time, comprising in fact three separate plants involved in shipbuilding, train manufacturing, and electrical appliances production.

The reorganization started with the shipyards, one of the most modern of Hungary's industries. This plant was at the same time one of the best organized, with most of the workers being union members. The management started things rolling with massive layoffs – several hundred workers were dismissed – and then in one of the shops it introduced the Bedeaux system. Not without reason, the management was expecting to break the workers' will to resist by unpredictable and sudden layoffs and thought that the workers would split into two camps: those who are afraid and those who are confident that they can survive and keep on working. In other words, the management was not only trying out the technical and economic effects of the new system, but also the extent of the workers' ability to resist. Although there were several flareups and continuous negotiations and

bargaining sessions going on, the fear of unemployment managed to cow the workers and they were not prepared to fight back. In short, they accepted the new order and started to work accordingly. Seeing this, the management moved again, introducing the squeeze in another shop too. Whereas before a riveter was paid eight *pengős* for driving in 420–430 rivets a day, now his norm went up to 560–570 rivets for which he was paid only 5.68 *pengős*. This was not the worst of it; the older, physically unsuitable workers were dismissed and many men with decades of service to the firm were thrown out into the street because "they did not fit into the new system".

This was quite simply too much for the union to take. The strike was called on the 18th of March, 1930. The management locked the gates and announced that all participants were fired. The workers took a secret vote on starting the strike and at first all went well, organization was sound. The union organized financial support for the strikers. The workers of the two other plants, the train manufacturing plant and the electrical appliances one, were the first to decide that they would turn over two hours' pay a week to the strikers for the duration of the strike. Then the chief shop stewards of the iron and machine factories held a meeting at which they decided that the workers of the iron industry would donate one hour's pay a week for the same duration. Donations came in from other trades too as well as from individuals.

The Social Democratic Party of Hungary turned the strike into a national cause. Lajos Kabók spoke in Parliament about the strike on March 21, 1930. Peyer listed the workers' grievances before a committee of the Ninth Congress of the Trade Unions, which was going on at the time. The Congress gave an enthusiastic welcome to the delegates of the striking workers.

The ironworkers organized against strikebreakers, preventing them from getting into the factory. It was very significant that workers in other factories acted in solidarity with the shipbuilders. The firm feared for its reputation and tried to honour its most pressing commitments, one of which was an order for a hundred silk factory wash basins. It transferred the order to the "Lakos and Székely" factory, but the workers of the Ganz plant were on their guard. Their leaders went to the workers of the latter, told them where the order was from and asked not to be stabbed in the back. The workers of the "Lakos and Székely" factory did not touch the order. They all lost their jobs, but the wash basins did not get made either.

In the meantime many weeks had passed and life was getting more and more difficult for the strikers. The strike fund was getting to the nil point and the donation money was running out. Sentiment against going on with the strike was growing among the workers and by the end of April, both the workers and the bosses were ready to seek some sort of compromise. The Ministry of Welfare was also drawn into the ensuing negotiations and an agreement was eventually concluded. The outcome was that the factory extended the Bedeaux system to cover the entire factory, but under somewhat modified terms. After a nearly two months long halt, on the 10th of May work commenced again.

After the shipyard, the Bedeaux system was also imposed on the tram manufacturing plant. By then the fight had been pretty well taken out of the workers. The management, however, sought to provoke conflict in order to once and for all destroy all and any obstacles to the long-term institutionalization of its speedup program. The opportunity finally came on the 8th of May, 1931, when there was a disagreement between a worker and one of the engineers concerning the worker's inability to fulfil his norm. The worker was fired on the spot. This did not go down well with the other workers who right away formed a ring around the engineer and were all set to beat him up. Needless to say the bosses called in the police who cleared the factory. The bosses announced the immediate dismissal of all of the workers of all three plants on account of this incident, whereas the workers of the other two plants knew nothing of this event. Everyone was busy working when suddenly the police appeared and ordered them to leave. Five thousand workers ended up on the street.

This was pretty serious even during the depression. In Parliament, Kabók asked for the floor and requested that the government order the rehiring of the workers. The National Federation of Industrialists also escalated its offensive. It announced that it was prepared to fire all thirty thousand iron-industry workers. The fired workers of the Ganz Works had their workbooks mailed out to them. In the subsequent negotiations the industrialists wanted the unions to guarantee that similar incidents would not take place. Only once the unions had agreed to this humiliating condition, were they willing to rehire the workers.

After this production went relatively smoothly for about two years. Then, in the summer of 1933, conflict broke out again, this time in the electrical appliances plant. Namely the plant had just received a major order, the completion of which meant an even greater speedup. The turners and machinists were told to work at more than one bench and had to fill out the so-called Bedeaux cards, which they refused to do. The atmosphere was tense and the situation deteriorated to the point whereby one of the norm supervisors was beaten. In July the workers of the factory had a mass meeting at which they decided to refuse to have anything to do with the Bedeaux cards. In response, the management once again closed down all three factories and fired all the workers.

The opposition, which was under communist leadership, and the locksmiths who had left the Federation[6] had a major influence among the workers of the electrical appliances plant. Consequently, in that plant the strike was not led by the union, but by an elected, twenty-five member strike committee, which was made up of opposition members, people from the splinter group and unorganized

[6] The locksmith section of the Central Federation of Iron- and Metal Workers left the Federation in 1928. In this move, which was made due to various financial and personal reasons, they were led by Aladár Schwarcz, the section's president, and they joined the organization of the turners who had split off earlier and who were led by István Hackspacher. This organization had about 3,000 members, a part of whom returned to the Federation in 1930. Those who had left had very sharp and justified criticisms of the union leaders' opportunism. However, their method of struggle weakened labour unity and was harmful to the trade-union movement.

workers. The committee undertook a two-front struggle, not only demanding that the Bedeaux system should be disavowed, but also that the union should not be involved in the negotiations, which meant the exclusion of the officially recognized representatives of the workers. This certainly dimmed the chances of the struggle since at the other two plants the union had no opposition. This meant that the workers of the one plant had to withstand pressure coming from the other two, which had already been "broken in" and worked by the Bedeaux system. The workers of the other two plants had no desire to engage in a struggle that looked hopeless from the start. Their leaders only encouraged this sort of pessimism. The reformist leaders had no intention whatsoever of supporting anything that was not led by them, especially not when their rivals were at the helm. The last thing on their minds was to give out strike pay from the union's funds to unorganized workers or those who were in the opposition.

The bosses knew very well that the weak point of the strike was precisely this lack of unity. Quite naturally they did everything to exploit it. They refused to deal with the elected strike committee, but were willing to receive Kabók. However, Kabók's position was well known; the strikers and the capitalists all knew that the union was opposed to this strike. The strike committee did everything that the union should have done. They collected money for the strikers, convened a joint meeting of the workers of the three plants, set up a headquarters, and set up a self-defence corps to keep strikebreakers away. Nevertheless, the strike did end in defeat.

There were other factories, too, of the iron industry where the bosses tried to implement the Bedeaux system, such as the Hoffher and Schrantz, the Baeder, the Telephone, and the Lamp Factories. But eventually the capitalists quit trying and the system never did come into general use.

Not so in the textile industry, however, where great efforts were made for the system's general application. The economic and the political situation in this branch was very different from that in the iron industry. Production in the textile industry at the end of the 1920's showed an over threefold increase over the pre-1914 level, an achievement which ranked it in second place among Hungary's industries. Production continued to grow during the depression, albeit only slowly. In other words, as far as the objective circumstances of wage struggles in that industry were concerned, they did not differ greatly from those during boom periods.

According to the 1930 census, most of the workers in the textile industry were women, 67.8 per cent in fact. There were few skilled workers required in this branch, at that time they made up 35.2 per cent of the total. Most of the women were of peasant or peasant-worker stock and they commuted from the villages around Budapest. Many of them regarded working in industry as a merely temporary occupation before getting married, or during their husbands were looking for a better-paying job, or they wanted to help out financially in some bigger family undertaking like building a house. As already mentioned, only some of the women were organized and it should be added here that the union did not

exactly overexert itself either because, in its opinion, "it didn't get its money's worth" for its efforts. Many of the women were apolitical and most were religious. However, there were small but well organized illegal communist cells operating in the textile factories.

The introduction of the Bedeaux system started in the largest Hungarian textile factory, the "Magyar Pamutipar", located in one of the suburbs of the capital. The method was the same as in the iron industry; a person, who today would be referred to as an efficiency expert, would stand behind the worker and with a stopwatch time every move. The workers not only feared for a decline in wages, but felt their personal dignity offended as well. On November 24, 1930 they went on strike.

The strikers sought the assistance of the union. The respective union was only willing to represent the workers at the negotiations and refused financial help. The factory directors had no trouble dealing with the workers, they could easily incite divisive conflicts among them. They accepted the services of a Christian-socialist union which supplied strikebreakers. Although the strike ended in defeat, it nevertheless sparked off a series of class conflicts and strikes in Hungary's textile industry. More or less successful strikes took place at several textile factories during this period.

Particularly large and lengthy was the struggle in the "Magyar Kender-, Len-Jutaipari Co." in Pesterzsébet, a Budapest suburb, during the spring of 1931. The directors announced a thirty per cent wage cut, in response to which the eight hundred and fifty workers of the factory went on strike on March 3, 1931. At the negotiations the strikers were represented by two functionaries of the textile workers' union, Samu Schwarcz and Anna Ratkó. This strike was well organized. This was indicated by the length of the strike and by the way scabs were dealt with. When the employers tried to bring in strikebreakers, the striking workers surrounded the factory and a hail of curses and rocks met the approaching scabs who fled in terror. The police rushed to protect them, drew their swords and attacked the strikers, several of whom were arrested.

The public of that typically working-class district supported the striking workers wholeheartedly. A collection was started for them, thanks to which the strikers could hold out for a longer time. The capitalists refused all concessions during the negotiations at which the mayor of the municipality acted as arbitrator. The result of the over three months long strike was that the wage reductions were lowered by five to ten per cent and that there were no later sanctions brought against any of the workers.

It was a common characteristic of strikes in the textile industry during those years that the participants were politically backward and lacked experience in the labour movement. It was for this reason that most of the strikes started spontaneously and exclusively for economic reasons. The greatest problem faced by the strikers was the individualism of their fellow workers who did not feel directly involved in the struggle at the given moment because no speedup had been introduced (yet) in their section of the plant, because their salaries had not

(yet) been reduced, because their foreman was a nice guy, etc. As early as the end of the last century, the labour movement of the developed capitalist countries had by and large found organizational solutions to all such problems and the unions of the more developed Hungarian industries were also free of such obstacles.

Given the above difficulties, the political development of the textile industry workers in the course of the 1930–1931 strikes, which brought them closer to the more experienced sectors of the working class, is especially noteworthy. They learned to persevere in the struggle and to defeat attempts at strikebreaking. In this respect, the communists working in the textile factories had a decisive influence.

During the depression, the workers had to struggle not only against the Bedeaux system, but also for "traditional" goals. The previously mentioned unevenness of the economic crisis opened the way even for so-called offensive moves.

For example, while on the whole coal mining was also in a slump, the sole Hungarian hard-coal mine in Pécs significantly increased its output. In the autumn of 1931 circumstances were favourable for initiating a struggle for higher wages. Almost all of the miners were organized workers. The union agreed that something should be done to improve wages, which were lowered in 1927. The unions demanded a twenty-five per cent pay hike, a fifty per cent rent cut[7] and that half of each worker's coal allotment be paid in cash. The work stoppage started in an organized manner, based on the demands set forth in the union's memorandum to the employers. On the 29th of October, the miners of Vasas, Somogy and Mecsekszabolcs went on strike, followed by Pécsbányatelep on the 30th. There were over two thousand miners involved.

The strike itself was without incident. The miners achieved a pay increase (from 5.14 to 5.60 *pengős*), rents were halved, half of the coal allotment was paid in cash and an annual once only twenty per cent of one month's wages were to be paid.

This was not the only struggle of Pécs's miners to end in victory for them during the depression years. In December 1932 there was another strike. On payday early that month, the directors, claiming a shortage of funds, were only willing to give out thirty per cent of each worker's wages. The miners walked out and after three days the employers produced the full amounts.

The Pécs strikes proved that even during a slump it was possible to wage a successful struggle for pay increases. The Social Democratic Party of Hungary was making ample political capital out of the workers' victories and even during the 1935 elections it reaped its dividends. The Social Democratic Party of Hungary continued to remain a significant political factor in the life of Pécs.

Of the strikes ending in a victory for the workers, the repeated strikes of the shoemakers were very important, in which between three and four thousand people participated. Since the communists were highly influential among the

[7] Most of the miners lived in a company-owned housing project.

shoemakers, the wage struggles were led jointly by the communists and the social democrats. The strikes of 1931 and 1933 were successful.

We cannot go into detail here and list every wage struggle that took place during the years under review, but we shall now deal with some of the special difficulties encountered in the course of these battles.

Ever since a chronicle is being kept of the class struggle between industrial workers and capitalists, there has at all times and in all places been present the problem of the *lack of unity* among the workers and contradictions among the working class. Although the capitalists are in severe competition with one another in the market, when it comes to dealing with the workers, they form a solid united front. The establishment of a united front among the workers has to overcome a series of problems first, such as their different levels of material interestedness in a strike, varying capacities to resist or persevere, and their different levels of political consciousness.

The dynamic of the strike movement was influenced by those differences which existed between the levels of political consciousness of the organized and the unorganized workers. In addition there were individual factors influencing events present as well, e.g., when it came to strike vote, it is obvious that different considerations motivated a man with a large family and a worker who was a bachelor, or someone who lived in one of the working-class districts of the city and someone who commuted from a village. (This last group also had the hope that during certain peak periods in agriculture they could get work close to home.) The unorganized workers were relatively quick to agree to strike, but when there were no fast results they became disillusioned and were apt to blame the organized workers, who worked at the same factory, for the hardships. The capitalists had great experience in the ancient tactic of divide and rule. (As related above, in the Ganz Works they set one plant against the other. In the Glass Factory of Salgótarján they created conflicts between the clear glassmakers and the coloured glass division. The same thing was done in the Brick Factory of Óbuda, where hostilities were started between the commuters and the Budapestians.)

Separate mention ought to be made of the role of the state in these struggles. The practice evolved in Hungary that at wage dispute negotiations representatives of the state, usually from the Ministry of Welfare, were also present to play the role of the "non partisan" arbitrator in the conflict between workers and the employers. But of course in most cases they quite openly and unequivocally supported the capitalists. Thus the unions were handicapped from the start by having to fight two opponents at the same time. Furthermore, unlike in the bourgeois democratic states, the police did not even bother to find a lawful excuse for becoming involved in the workers' struggle. Their involvement was a matter of course. (During the strike at the Ganz Works, the scabs were escorted into the factory by the police who remained to watch over their welfare during the day and then escorted them back home.) The workers not only had to deal with pressures from the bosses, but also from the counter-revolutionary state.

The struggles for better wages during these years, aside from the economic crisis, occurred under very unfavourable circumstances and a great many of them ended in defeat. Defeats of course had a depressing effect on the workers, who tended to conclude that the capitalists were stronger than them and that struggling against them was an exercise in futility. After a time the point was reached whereby such weaknesses in the movement started to reproduce themselves, resulting in a decline in the number of organized workers and in making it easier for the employers to import strikebreakers, and so on. This process was in its beginning stages during the depression in Hungary. Only in part could the heroic efforts of the communist and leftist social-democratic activists of the working-class movement counteract this trend. As a result of this regression, starting in the mid-1930's the Hungarian clients of German fascism, the various extreme right-wing groups such as the fascist Arrow-Cross and the Scythe-Cross parties, managed to recruit people from among the politically backward and least organized sectors of the working class.

THE ROLE OF THE ORGANIZED WORKERS IN THE POLITICAL STRUGGLES OF THE ERA

The economic crisis brought with it a general political crisis throughout Hungary, as a result of which the various but hitherto largely dormant sectional interests of the groupings or cliques within the ruling class broke in fury to the surface. The government, which had to serve the interests of the ruling class as a whole, now had to cope with quite a number of contradictions of different degrees and nature and try to provide some sort of solution.

The mass movements of the working class were nothing less than the clear expression of the desperation and feeling of hopelessness racking the nation. All sectors of the working people of the nation had ample cause, some more than others, to feel despair. The peasants, including those well off, were hit terribly hard by the plumeting wholesale purchase prices. (This does not, however, mean that retail prices dropped to the same extent, i. e., that the consumers got a better deal. The decline in the peasantry's standard of living did not happen in favour of that of the urban dwellers.) Business declined for the small retailers and the self-employed craftsmen as a natural result of the decline in consumer purchasing power, but their taxes either remained the same or were increased. Nor was the middle class free of the danger of layoffs; staff cuts were not unknown, causing many white-collar workers to become déclassé. These people vested their hopes for personal salvation in the government.

There was a succession of three governments during the years of the economic crisis. Count István Bethlen resigned in August 1931 after ten years in power. Count Gyula Károlyi was Prime Minister for only a year and between 1932 and 1936 Gyula Gömbös led the government.

We cannot here go into the details of each government's general political

activities. Only one aspect of their politics is of concern here, namely their attitude towards the working-class movement.

Bethlen's labour policy was based on three "principles". The extreme right of the labour movement he saw as partners in the sense that they played the role of a (from the government's point of view) useful, "constructive" and loyal opposition. The leftist, revolutionary wing of the movement and the centrist social democrats were a matter for the police in his view. He made no overtures in that direction, attempting neither conciliation nor corruption, using only brute force. Those areas which were judged as particularly important, such as the railways and the post office, he declared as being off limits for the unions and he sought to create a mass base which would bear allegiance directly to the government.

Such a differentiated approach to the working-class movement proved practical and fruitful from the government's point of view. The social-democratic leaders, whose positions were in many ways dependent upon the good will of the government, did what under different circumstances would have been the task of a rightist mass party, that is, keeping the political consciousness and activity of the workers under control. Bethlen did not resort to any liberal welfare rhetoric; his government was far too openly in the service of finance-capital and the large estates.

His successor, Count Gyula Károlyi, lacked the finesse for such delicate political manoeuvring. He lacked Bethlen's experience and ability to think in broad perspectives. He knew nothing of the labour movement and was not at all clear as to its significance. He tried to turn the whole of the movement over to the police and that included the Social Democratic Party of Hungary as well, which was a serious mistake from his point of view. His attitude toward the social democrats strengthened the party's influence and pushed the vacillators to the left. Károlyi's approach was straightforward (martial law, free use of weapons, closing down the *Népszava,* hanging communist leaders), but it was counter-productive (shift to the left on the part of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and an upsurge in mass movements).

Gömbös's policies differed not only from those of Bethlen; but he went even further than Károlyi. He aimed for the full liquidation of the unions, the total isolation of the social democrats from the working class and getting the latter's allegiance to fascism. He wanted a labour policy that could disregard the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, but he was willing to use certain social democrats to achieve his ends. He considered himself a disciple of the Duce and the Fuhrer and expected that like them he too could win the hearts and minds of the workers.

During his rule attacks on the organizations of the workers and their living standard were paralleled by social welfare demagoguery, which became a major weapon in the arsenal of Hungarian fascism.

Such was the political background defining the political struggles of organized labour, of which we are going to discuss only the more outstanding ones.

The Budapest municipal government elections fell due at the end of 1930. This

event was significant not only because it followed on the heels of the events of September 1st, but also because City Hall was the only level of government where it might be possible for the working-class movement to succeed in winning genuine and important posts whereby it could represent its own interests. The social-democratic aldermen were involved in all the affairs pertaining to city government and they even succeeded in getting certain welfare items approved. (For example, the wages in the city-owned factories were higher than the average for the nation.) It is understandable that the Social Democratic Party of Hungary placed great importance on the elections.

The December 1930 Budapest municipal elections were very successful from the social democrats' point of view. They received 73,442 votes which was 27.5 per cent of the number cast. This meant an increase of over 14,000 votes since the last elections in 1926. In the working-class districts its share of the votes was between 30 and 50 per cent. (It must be added here that the majority of the workers did not have the franchise due to the electoral law then in existence which made the franchise dependent on a number of stringent factors.) The combined totals of the opposition parties gave them a majority of the popular vote, but that of course did not mean that they could take over the running of the city.[8]

Six months after the Budapest municipal elections, the national elections were called.[9] The platform of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary contained the following major demands: an end to the emergency laws, self-determination for villages and counties, a referendum on the form of government, amnesty for political prisoners and exiles, reform of the Upper House; progressive system of taxation, legislation to ban usury; land reform, expropriation of Church and entailed property; compulsory unemployment insurance, legislation banning eviction, the fourty-hour work week set down by law, and that social insurance, which was taken away in 1927, be once again an autonomous enterprise. But above all, the primary and cardinal demand was for a universal, equal and secret suffrage.

The election campaign mobilized the masses and brought with it an increase in political activism. The Social Democratic Party of Hungary organized hundreds of meetings. It was expected that in the working-class districts the Party's meetings and rallies would be many and well attended, but that very often these events were similarly well attended and also numerous in the rural towns and

[8] In addition to the social democrats, the Christian Opposition Party, led by István Friedrich, the National Free Thinkers' Party, led by Károly Rassay, and the National Democratic Party, led by Béla Fábián, participated in the elections with an oppositionist platform. Respectively they had received 6.8, 11 and 10.4 per cent of the votes. Together with the votes got by the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, this gave the combined opposition a majority mandate of 55.7 per cent. However, the body running the municipality was made up of two parts, one elected by the people and the other appointed by the government. In other words, the government party would have retained its majority even if it had received only 15 per cent of the votes.

[9] According to the electoral law, in Budapest, its suburbs and six rural urban centres voting was by secret ballot, everywhere else it was an open vote. In these latter areas the social democrats had no chance at winning a mandate but they could conduct a propaganda campaign.

villages, that was indeed surprising given the existing electoral system. This system was fixed in a way so as to make it actually impossible for a candidate of the opposition to win in a village or rural town riding. Thus it was natural that during the June 1931 elections the government candidates were assured of a guaranteed victory in the open-vote districts, winning 204 mandates out of the possible nation-wide total of 245. In those areas where voting was by secret ballot, the Social Democratic Party of Hungary received 165,765 votes, or 28.9 per cent of the total. In such areas they got the most votes, about 11,000 more than the government party, with the rest of votes divided up between the bourgeois opposition and the splinter parties. The social democrats made their best showing in the industrial districts, getting 34.6 per cent of the votes in the Budapest suburbs, 37.3 per cent in Győr, 40.7 per cent in Miskolc and 45.3 per cent in Pécs. In these areas the number of votes cast for the social democrats far surpassed the number of workers eligible to vote, indicating that many petty bourgeois and intellectuals regarded that party as representing their interests.

In analysing the vote, we can see that the right wing had no influence worthy of note among the working class. There was as yet no party in Hungary with a program comparable to Hitler's National Socialist German Workers' Party and the government party did not get too many labour votes. (The votes that were cast in favour of the government party in working-class and industrial ridings could be traced to the local middle-class strata and well-to-do peasants.) Those people who voted for the Social Democratic Party of Hungary did so with the conviction that it was the party most to the left of the Hungarian political spectrum and the clearest representative of what it means to be in the opposition, that is, as far as the legal parties were concerned.

Already in the course of the election campaign it was noticeable that the social democrats' influence was on the rise among the ranks of the poor peasantry. Events in the months following the elections further proved that the most conscious elements of the agrarian proletariat, who were struck hard by the depression, saw that the way to a solution of their problems lay in an alliance with the industrial working class.

During the early part of 1930, the Minister of the Interior gave the Social Democratic Party of Hungary permission to set up branches in the villages. (Prior to that they had been allowed to organize only in the cities and industrial settlements.) The aim of this move was to divide the rural opposition forces and to prevent the expression of the dissatisfaction of the peasantry. However, the activity of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary in the villages was a lot more successful than the government had anticipated. Social Democratic Party of Hungary branches sprang up everywhere and in some villages almost all of the adult male population took out party membership. These branches soon became the centres of the radical elements of the poor peasantry.

The growing social-democratic agitation provoked the hostility of the authorities. There was no legal basis whatsoever for preventing political organizing by the social democrats, but the local authorities nevertheless took the

law into their own hands and started a round of repression, counting on their superiors to look the other way or even on their implicit encouragement. Some of the large estates refused to hire those who were members of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. In several villages party members were summoned to the police station where they were forced to sign a statement to the effect that they would resign from the Party. Anyone who refused to sign received a severe beating and during times of seasonal work they were detained for weeks, depriving them of earning the money that would tide them and their families over the entire year.

The Social Democratic Party of Hungary did not want an open conflict with the government. However, political persecution in the villages was reaching such proportions that the Party could no longer tolerate it. The leadership decided to initiate a nation-wide campaign in defense of the violated civil liberties. April 7, 1932 was set as the date of the protest. Organized workers and the agrarian proletariat were to show their solidarity against the despotism of the government. According to the original plan, members of the Party were to pay a call on the representative of the local government authority – the mayor or town clerk – in those places where there was a Party branch operating and they were to hand over the Party's memorandum. On the same day the industrial workers were to hold a half-an-hour nation-wide strike to serve as a warning to the government, and the leaders of the Party and of the trade unions were to present their grievances to the Prime Minister.

By way of setting the stage, the social-democratic Members of Parliament gave unusually militant speeches in Parliament and articles in the *Népszava* also attacked the government sharply.

On the 5th of April the Minister of the Interior banned the *Népszava*. In response, the meeting of the shop stewards of the printers in the capital announced a strike against all of the dailies.

On the 7th the factory gates in Budapest remained closed. The National Federation of Industrialists, anticipating the half-hour walk out, announced a work stoppage for the entire day. Workers demonstrated at several locations in the city and the police arrested 473 people. Significant political events took place in the rural areas as well.

On this day at several locations throughout the country, mainly in the villages and rural townships, the local organizations of the Social Democratic Party presented a copy of the memorandum to the municipal halls. In every case the delegations were followed by huge crowds who waited for the outcome of the talks at the town-halls. The crowds were almost everywhere met by a contingent of the gendarmes. There were places where the presentation of the memorandum went without incident; the people and the gendarmes merely tried to stare each other down and once the delegation had returned and made its report, everybody went on home. However, at several locations there were serious clashes between the people and the gendarmes, for example, in Békéscsaba, which is a town in southern Hungary with a population of 30,000, where mounted gendarmes

attacked a crowd several thousand strong. The people defended themselves, pulled one gendarme off his horse, wounding him. Several people sustained serious injuries in the course of the battle.

In Nyirtura several hundreds of people accompanied the delegation to the municipal hall. Once there, the delegation was unexpectedly and for no reason whatsoever arrested. Needless to say, this rather upset the gathered crowd, who demanded the delegation's immediate release. In the heat of the argument some of the demonstrators were so threatening that one of the gendarmes fired into the crowd in fear, killing a sixty-five year old peasant. The other demonstrators received bayonet wounds and several were arrested.

In Balmazújváros, the old centre of agrarian socialism, some 1,200 people, with many women among them, marched to the market place surrounded by gendarmes. While the delegation met with the town clerk, the gendarmes charged at the crowd, part of which they managed to get into a narrow side street where they beat up on the people. The masses defended themselves, engaging the gendarmes with sticks and stones. They tried to unhorse the gendarmes who opened fire, killing one and wounding eight. Several people were arrested. But this by no means meant an end to the restlessness; at the martyr's funeral a huge crowd gathered. So did the mounted police who attacked the assembled mourners.

In addition to the above, there were various incidents in several other locations. The poor peasants who had participated in the disturbances met with severe reprisals. They were picked up during the night, taken down to the police stations and tortured for days. Many became permanently crippled.

Although the government did not respond to any of the demands made in the memorandum, the events of April 7th have remained a significant moment in the history of the struggle of the Hungarian agricultural proletariat. In the rural areas, where repression was more open and brutal and the people were much more defenseless than in the cities, this was the first time that masses of people took to the streets with leftist slogans. The events made a lasting impression in the minds of the peasants.

Following the April 7th events, negotiations started between the government and the leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. The Party gave in under the pressure and surrendered its right to organize among the poor peasantry. Following this agreement the rural Social Democratic Party of Hungary branches simply withered away in the course of the next one or two years.

Shortly after the April events something else happened which stirred public opinion. On June 15, 1932 the police staged a surprise raid on the office of the secretariat of the illegal Hungarian Party of Communists and arrested four of its leaders, Imre Sallai, Sándor Fürst, Frigyes Karikás and György Kilián. Since martial law was in effect throughout the country[10], all four faced the likelihood of execution.

[10] On September 12, 1931 the railway line near Biatorbágy (a village close to Budapest) was blown

The underground and very severely restricted communist movement went into action to save the lives of its leaders. Democratic public opinion was mobilized throughout the world. People like Thomas Mann, Bertold Brecht, Henri Barbusse, Edouard Herriot, Leon Blum, John Galsworthy, etc. spoke out in their defense. Of course the communists mobilized the organized workers first and their protest spread throughout the trade-union movement and the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. They collected signatures and organized protest rallies.

The leadership of the Social Democractic Party of Hungary showed a rather ambiguous attitude in the matter. On the one hand, in accord with the general practice of the Socialist Workers' International, they condemned *in general* all repression, legal sanctions against political activity, and the state of martial law. On the other hand, they made every effort to prevent their organizations and members from coming into any type of conflict with the authorities and from doing anything that would make them seem in any way pro-communist. The majority of the unions' rank and file did not agree with this position; they wanted to express in no uncertain terms that they were opposed to the incarceration of the communist leaders.

The workers of the Ganz Works, where Karikás had once worked as a locksmith and had been a shop steward, came up with the suggestion that they should stage a strike and that the shop stewards' collective, through the iron-workers' union, should urge a general strike, involving the whole of the iron industry. The workers' proposal was accepted unanimously by the factory's shop stewards. However, when they went to the union headquarters and told Kabók, the latter sharply rejected the suggestion and forbade all strike organizing.

The Union of the Employees of Private Firms, Fürst's union, collected signatures for a protest addressed to the government. The pages of signatures, however, were torn up by the leaders of the union, Kéthly and Kertész, and those organizing the drive were expelled from the union. The situation in the construction workers' and in the tailors' unions was the same and similar events took place at the Kőbánya district meeting of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and other labour meetings.

Whatever actions did take place on behalf of the four communists, they were not enough to stop the government from committing murder. On July 29, 1932 Sallai and Fürst were executed and Karikás and Kilián were turned over to a civil court which sentenced both of them to four years of prison.

Following the executions, the social democrats' political activities became even more dominated by a defensive attitude. This was brought about by both national

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up. There were twenty-two victims. The background to the attack has yet to be clarified. The person who carried out the attack, Szilveszter Matuska, a merchant and house-owner, was in connection with certain extreme right circles. Using the attack as a pretext, the government declared a state of martial law, which was extended to cover all communist organizational activities.

and international political developments. In October 1932 Gyula Gömbös became the Prime Minister. As already mentioned, it was his admitted aim to liquidate both the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the trade-union movement. He wanted to replace the trade unions with the so-called "corporations" set up in fascist Italy. That would have meant the end of the legal Hungarian labour movement, but due to the resistance of the workers and of the anti-fascist elements of the bourgeoisie the plan came to naught.

Gömbös's hand was strengthened by Hitler's ascent to power on January 30, 1933. Not only did they share a common ideology, but Hungarian fascists also had close organizational links with their German counterpart since the early 1920's. The liquidation of the German Social Democratic Party caused tremendous shock waves in the ranks of Hungarian social democracy. It meant the loss of their foremost international source of moral, political and quite significant financial support. It seemed that there was no way that Hungarian social democracy and the trade unions could be protected from Gömbös and the German type of fascism that he represented. The leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary figured that the liberal elements among the major capitalists and the conservative, pro-Catholic large estate owners, the political representatives of which did not look with favour upon Gömbös's dictatorial ambitions, would eventually force the government to resign and restore the political status quo of the 1920's, which had granted the Social Democratic Party of Hungary a degree of legitimacy. It was for this reason that they tried to align their politics with these reactionary elements, which at the given time were at least anti-fascist. And the reason for that was that both the big capitalists and the large estate owners were of the opinion that Hitler's rule would be a short lived one and consequently they were reluctant to commit themselves, preferring to nourish, at least for the time being, their British and French connections. This was the point of agreement between them and the Social Democratic Party of Hungary.

Given all of the above, the leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary wanted to avoid all and any moves that may in some way have an alienating effect on the politicians who represented the interests of the big capitalists and large estate owners and also anything that might give the government a pretext to ban the Party and the trade unions. Therefore, there were no political initiatives of any significance taken during the rest of the depression years. Social-democratic Members of Parliament gave cautious speeches in Parliament and the trade unions limited themselves to moderate wage demands.

The struggles of the Hungarian working class during the years of the great economic crisis were part of the international fight against the offensive of monopoly capital and fascism. The Hungarian workers had to wage their struggles in the midst of more difficult circumstances than the proletariat of most West-European nations. In the course of this struggle hundreds of thousands of workers and agrarian proletariat participated in battles directed against the capitalist system. That generation of workers who grew up following the Republic

of Councils received their baptism in the class struggle. These tens of thousands of young workers did not have the glorious experience of having been shareholders in the dictatorship of the proletariat and their budding consciousness was being subverted by the poisonous propaganda of the counter-revolution. These masses were in the junior form of the school of the class struggle as they participated in the various movements during the depression, starting from the recognition of their class positions and graduating to conscious activity.

From the point of view of the ideological and political development of the Hungarian working class, often the fact of the struggle itself was more important, than its actual outcome, be it a victory or a defeat. Historically, what counts is not whether a strike or demonstration against unemployment resulted in a wage hike or job opportunities, but that people fought back and that in the course of that fight their class consciousness was raised. The Hungarian revolutionary working-class movement piled up significant amounts of political capital during these struggles. That capital paid dividends in the later years in the struggle against fascism, but primarily after the Liberation.

THE ROLE OF THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE ANTI-FASCIST RESISTANCE MOVEMENT (1941–1945)

by
István Pintér

Without declaring a state of war, on June 22, 1941 fascist Germany attacked the Soviet Union. A few days later, on June 26th, Horthy's Hungary joined the aggressors.

After declaring war, the Hungarian government concentrated on getting the population and the nation's resources for the support of the war effort. The chief obstacle to this was expected to be the resistance of the working masses. The people, and above all the workers, were not enthusiastic about this war. Their passivity and reluctance to show any signs of support did not hold out much hope for the Hungarian ruling class which knew well the consequences of the First World War, namely, the series of revolutions. Therefore the government endeavoured to soften up the workers by a series of terrorist incidents, by placing in jeopardy the legal status of the Social Democratic Party and of the trade unions and by forcing the right-wing social-democratic leaders to be loyal, thereby hoping to weaken and disarm the anti-war sentiment.

In this situation, the attitude of the trade unions, which contained the politically most active elements of the working class, could not be a matter of indifference either for the government or for the anti-war forces. In many respects it was up to the trade unions to ensure steady production in the factories with military contracts, but the same way they could have a major role in getting the anti-war resistance under way.

It is an undeniable fact that compared to the situation in the mid-thirties, there was a decline in the number of organized workers relative to the total working-class population. This was even more marked among the workers of large factories during a time when there was a major concentration initiated in Hungary's industries in the wake of the depression and the later war boom. In 1942 the number of industrial proletariat, counting the workers of the areas attached to Hungary[1], was over one million. Growth in small industry was twenty per cent, in large industry over forty per cent.

[1] According to the so-called "Vienna agreements" of the Axis powers (1938, 1940) Hungary was given Southern Slovakia, Carpathian Ukraine and Northern Transylvania. After Yugoslavia was invaded (1941), Hungarian troops occupied Bácska and Muraköz.

And what do we see as being the case among the organized workers? In 1938, out of some 700,000 industrial workers, over a hundred thousand were members of unions under the leadership of the Social Democratic Party, i.e., 15.5 per cent of the total number of workers. Despite the rapid growth of the number of industrial workers, the proportion of those organized continued to decline due to the anti-union measures that followed the outbreak of the war. Also, there was a decline in the number of organizations. During the first half of 1942 – we have data up to this time only – the Trade Union Council had a membership roll of 70–80,000, which was 7–8 per cent of the total number of workers. The decline was even greater in the case of the miners, whose numbers doubled over the 1936 figures and reached 72,000. However, the number of organized miners fell to about a quarter of the previous level, from 3,500 to 900. That is, while in 1936 every tenth miner was organized, in 1942 only every eightieth. In large industry the situation was by no means better. In 1936 there were 35–36,000 organized workers, that is, only every twentieth worker of the large industry belonged to one or another socialist union.

There were a number of factors involved in this major decline in the number of organized workers. One and perhaps the foremost reason was that the trade unions were coming under increasing attack from the government and the extreme-right parties and organizations. To top it all off, there were the trusteeships[2] placed over the factories, in the course of which the military did its best to rid the place of every organized worker. Another factor involved in the decline of the number of organized workers was that in the wake of the economic boom caused by the war production, the number of workers increased very rapidly, being swelled by the politically backward poor peasants' influx to the cities. Only a small portion of them could be got to join the union. Another factor was the role played by the rightist trade-union bosses who did their best to disarm the workers' political and economic struggles and to stagnate the union. And last but not least many workers were drafted for active military service, and this contributed to the disproportionate relationship of organized and unorganized workers.

Nevertheless the political influence of the organized workers remained strong among the whole of the working class. Although both the extreme right and the government party, especially after the mid-1930's, made various attempts to gain a foothold among the industrial working class, they never did succeed in making much headway. Throughout, it was the trade unions that remained, both numerically and political influence-wise, the biggest and most significant organizations of the working class, as it was they who could organize masses of workers to carry out economic and political actions. This is an important achievement, especially if we consider that the rightist labour groups got everything they wanted by way of political and financial support from the

[2] This was a system introduced in 1940 whereby military commanders were assigned to the plants involved in war production.

government and the local authorities, while on their part, the trade unions and their members were being persecuted. In other words, although small in numbers, the organized sector of the working class, experienced in political and economic struggle, was a force that the government had to reckon with. The group centered around the ex-Prime Minister Bethlen and the Minister of the Interior, Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer, who although belonging to the ruling class, had a more realistic outlook on events, also recognized the import of the organized working class. This group, in contradistinction to the extreme right, the government party's pro-Nazi outfits and the military chiefs-of-staff, opposed the persecution of the trade unions and, instead, urged a political line whereby the reformist leaders of the unions could be induced toward loyalty to the regime and, through them, the organized workers would support the war production. Their plans coincided with the goals of the right-wing social democrats whose chief concern was to preserve the legal status of the trade unions at any cost.

The Hungarian Party of Communists had the following political priorities after the middle of the 1930's: the repulsion of Hungarian fascism and its liquidation, the creation of a democratic system of government and keeping Hungary clear of the fascist Axis and from the war. Above all, this called for the unity of the working class and the solidarity of the progressive forces. The left was gaining in strength in the Social Democratic Party and in the trade unions which were led by the latter, which meant that the chances of a united front were getting better. This trend was helped by the changes that had taken place within the international working-class movement after the mid-1930's such as the bankruptcy of social democracy in Germany and Austria, the success of the Popular Front in France, Spain, etc. During the second half of the 1930's, the cooperation of the communists and the social democrats led to a number of joint actions in the trade unions, in the young workers' organizations, in workers' education and so on. The joint actions started for the protection of the trade unions and for the unhampered maintenance of the legality of the Social Democratic Party strengthened the militant trend within the social-democratic organizations and contributed to the fact that even when the going was very tough, the long-time union members stuck it out and did not desert the union. The results that were attained in the course of the second half of the thirties made it possible that even during the very difficult circumstances which followed the nation's entry into the war there were favourable prerequisites present whereby the organized workers and the trade unions themselves could eventually become involved in the resistance movement.

After the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Communist Party figured that the most important thing it could do was to try and get the country out of the war, the signing of a separate peace agreement, and the strengthening of the anti-Nazi national unity. It endeavoured to seize the most favourable opportunities for the creation of the unity of the anti-war forces and their mobilization for the struggle for peace.

The trade unions had an important role in the struggle against the war and in uniting the anti-Nazi forces. This was all the more so because within the ranks of the unions, the communists and the leftist social democrats could be in touch with the masses of workers and thereby influence the independence movement which involved the most varied strata of Hungarian society.

PASSIVE EXPECTATION OR ACTIVE ANTI-FASCIST STRUGGLE?

The Peyerist rightist leaders of the unions urged a stance of political passivity after Hungary's entry into the war. They called on the organized workers to maintain production and to keep away from politics. According to them, passivity during the war years would be the best guarantee for surviving the hard times and for protecting the trade unions. They were opposed to the independence movement claiming that the movement thrust the demands of the workers into the background.

The communists and the leftist social democrats were unflagging in their efforts to organize and educate so that the trade unions should not fall for this passive onlooker, wait-and-see claptrap and fall victim to the demoralizing effects of helplessness in the face of fascist blows, but to the contrary, that they should be pillars of the national resistance and of the protection effort against the ravages of the war.

The communists and the leftist social democrats paid a lot of attention toward dispelling the mistrust that had arisen among some of the organized workers concerning the politics of independence. They made it very clear that a broad-based anti-fascist struggle was not only not in conflict with the interests of the working class, but directly served those interests. The results of the actions undertaken in the unions at the initiative of the communists had made it increasingly clear even to the doubters that the independence movement was not directed against the interests of the working class. To the contrary, within the framework of the anti-Nazi struggle there were even greater opportunities for voicing and struggling for the just political and economic demands of the working class.

The successes of these actions are mentioned in the August 21, 1941 report of Sombor-Schweinitzer, the deputy chief-of-police in Budapest. By way of introduction, he mentioned that sympathy for the Soviet Union was growing every day among both the organized workers and those who were also industrial workers but outside of the unions. Among the ironworkers there were an extraordinary number of workers who were hostile to the bosses "who acted as protectors of the fascist war mongerers". In summary, he said that the mood of the workers was largely characterized by anti-fascism and if the war dragged on for a long time then by all means bolshevik, action oriented propaganda would find a fertile soil among these people.

The actions initiated by the communists were primarily directed at protecting the trade unions and maintaining their legal status because not only the government but also the extreme rightist movement threatened their existence. For example, on September 7, 1941 the members of the Arrow-Cross Party's[3] district organizations in the fourth, eighth, ninth, tenth and fourteenth districts of the capital, some 2,500–3,000 people, wanted to storm the union headquarters of the construction workers. This would have been the signal for a general attack on the trade unions as a whole. The "advance guard" of some 350 people were scattered by the workers and the Arrow-Cross bunch gave up. Similar incidents took place at Csepel – the industrial heartland of the nation at the time and still significant today – and elsewhere. These successful actions in the face of fascist attacks served not only to increase the self-confidence of the organized workers, but also increased the pro-labour sentiment among the anti-German intelligentsia and bourgeois circles. At the end of 1941, when Prime Minister Bárdossy once again dragged out the old saw about "nationalizing" the trade unions, that is, the establishing of corporate organizations which previous governments also had had a go at, he ran into opposition not only from the trade unions, but also from the workers of the Christian-socialist organizations and indeed, even certain elements of the bourgeoisie opposed it. Seeing the united stand of the working class, Bárdossy was forced to give up his plan and the fascicization of the trade unions only came up again when the German troops occupied the country.

In addition to protecting the trade unions, those actions which were intended to ease the workers' and their families lives, to get more food to them and to combat the rising prices, also had the effect of being a shot in the arm for the life of the union as a whole. Efforts to get the unorganized workers and those who had come under fascist influence to become involved in these actions were partly successful. The workers sent petitions to the commanders in charge of the factories placed under trusteeship via delegates, demanding a return to the eight-hour workday and paid holidays and the improvement of the work conditions. This movement quickly spread to all of the other trade unions and at the union meetings held in the autumn of 1941 these demands were the main topics of discussion. The construction workers, textile workers, ironworkers, leather workers, and the Federation of Public Transport Workers were the ones demanding higher wages, the raising of the amount of food per worker, the starting of factory cafeterias and making the government's measures for the preferential treatment of those working in the war industry plants extended to all industrial workers.

The action brought many partial results and this served to draw more support from among the workers. At the National Congress of the Trade Unions, held in

[3] This outfit was a fascist party formed in 1937. It aped the German Nazis, regarding themselves as sort of a Hungarian branch. The German government used them to blackmail the Hungarian government. On October 15, 1944 the occupying German troops made this party the government and under their fascist terror rule Hungary – Hitler's last lackeys – became a bloody mess.

March 1942, there was a resolution adopted at the insistence of the workers on the Trade Union Council's mobilizing everything at its disposal to achieve the workers' demands. The Congress resolution demanded that prices and wages be got into some sort of order and that the distribution of food, shoes and clothes to the workers and other employees be "organized properly in regard for the extraordinary situation", and that in every type of work those who perform heavy physical labour be given extra food ration cards. They called for uncompromising struggle against price jackers and the busting up of the black market. They demanded that the social welfare policies be strictly adhered to – minimum wages, eight-hour workday, paid vacations, children's allowance, overtime pay, closing hour in shops, and Sundays off – and that the respective authorities supervise this situation. The resolution came out in favour of setting up the grievance committees, introducing a factory constitution, and the legal codification of collective bargaining. They demanded freedom of movement for the trade unions, legal protection against the constant attacks of the authorities and the various phoney labour organizations and, finally the right to assemble and organize. All of this indicated that militancy was on the rise in the unions and that the Peyerist bootlicking politics were rejected.

The trade unions started to move against the military trusteeship and the plants having been assigned military commanders. The primary aim was to get rid of the worst such commanders. In several plants the workers were all set to strike in order to back up their demands. But the rightist union bosses did their best to disarm this political movement and therefore the workers were successful only in some places.

There were other factors too involved in shaping the growing activism of the trade unions. The foremost of them was the growing strength of the social democrats' left wing and the increasing influence, both political and organizational, of the Hungarian Party of Communists. After the outbreak of the war the communists increased their efforts in rebuilding their organizational network in the trade unions too. By 1941 in certain unions communist cells had been organized within the individual sections. Such illegal communist groups were active in the painters' and stonemasons' sections of the construction workers' federation, in the clothing, and grocers' section of the commercial employees' union, at the various plants of the capital's public transportation company, and in the trade unions of the textile workers, leather workers, tailors, woodworkers, gold- and silversmiths, furriers, glove-makers, luggage-makers, confectioners, chemical industry workers, printers, unskilled labourers, and ironworkers. In order to coordinate this trade-union work and to rally everyone, the Central Committee of the Hungarian Party of Communists established communist committees in the unions of the construction workers, of the commercial employees and at the public transport corporation. In addition to the Budapest district committee, an inter-trade committee was also established.

Another favourable influence on the work of the trade unions came from the fact that the communists and the leftist social-democratic leaders had started

a series of talks, as a result of which there came about a certain degree of unity in the organization of the anti-fascist and anti-war independence struggle and the mobilization of the working class. As a result, on October 6 and November 1, 1941 there were anti-fascist demonstrations and the Christmas 1941 issue of *Népszava,* the central organ of the Social Democratic Party, contained articles by well-known politicians, public personalities and leading intellectuals, who, although having different political views, all came out in support of the need to struggle against fascism. The camp of the active anti-fascist fighters in the trade unions was increased by the fact that the leaders of the peasantry, the progressive intelligentsia and the anti-Nazi petty bourgeois and bourgeois groups' representatives – although a part of the organized workers had reservations about the participation of the latter – came closer and even joined the anti-Nazi struggle. Agreement with an approval of the communists' politics was also evidenced by the fact that in certain trade unions several communists were elected to leading posts. According to a subsequent police report, in the Federation of Tram and Local Railway Employees and in the leather workers' union there were thirteen communists in leading posts, in the construction workers' there were twenty, in the commercial employees' and in the iron and metal industry workers' there were three, and in some other unions there were one or two communists in the leadership. Actually there were considerably more communists in the leadership of the various unions, but those who did not get arrested were not included in the police files on communists. For example, in the union of the food industry workers there were eleven communists in the elected leading bodies, but the police report mentioned only two.

The growing communist influence made it possible for getting the unions more involved in the independence movement, not only indirectly by way of the economic struggle but directly as well. Initially the anti-fascist cultural programs, which were still within the limits of legality, proved to be the best form for this. The Party's Central Committee had correctly assessed the possibilities inherent in reviving the worker-culture groups, a progressive tradition from the past, to bring together the anti-fascist forces. It recognized that through the "lessons for today" that these traditions had, it would be easier to get the message across that the independence movement under revolutionary leadership and the drive for the creation of an anti-fascist national unity were not in contradiction with the final aims of the working class and with proletarian internationalism. The Party's leaders were also clear that these cultural meetings would bring closer to the working class those intellectuals and bourgeois groups who were opposed to fascism. They were confident in making these people see that the workers, who had been termed as being without a nation, in the sense of having no national allegiance, had faithfully preserved the progressive traditions of the past, indeed, it was they who were the real keepers and developers of the ideals of freedom and other progressive concepts.

The support given by the organized working class contributed to the runaway success of the series of performances put on at the end of 1941 and 1942 spring,

called "The Poet and His Age" and "Undyingly for Your Country", which brought to life the memories and lessons of the Hungarian struggles for freedom against the Austrians. The fact that it was such a big hit had a good effect on the worker-culture groups. It made it easier to breathe new life into the unions' culture ensembles which were sort of wilting during 1939–41, or getting new ones going and getting contemporary, anti-fascist themes into the programs. Things were buzzing in the workers' restarted or newly set up theatre ensembles in the unions of the ironworkers, confectioners, chemical workers and construction workers, in the Workers' Physical Fitness Association, in the Iron Workers' Gymnastics Association and many other labour organizations. In addition to presenting the progressive traditions of the past and those pertaining to the freedom struggle in particular, there were also anti-German politicians and reporters invited, sometimes even to participate. There were many performances and evening programs in the course of the preparations for the March 15th demonstration in 1942. There would have been more if not for the harassment by the authorities and the lack of places to put on performances. In the cultural centre of the ironworkers' union headquarters, various unions organized performances for Saturdays and Sundays. "The crowd just piled in for these shows", concluded in his book published in 1942 Ferenc Hont, one of the communist directors of these cultural programs. These March cultural evenings were interpreted by the performers and audiences alike as manifestations of protest against Hitler's war and his Hungarian lackeys, wrote the central organ of the communists, the illegal *Szabad Nép* (Free people), in its April 1942 issue.

In terms of content, message, audience appeal, and rave press, particularly outstanding was the April 18, 1942 performance of the leather workers' theatre troupe, when they presented József Katona's tragedy, *Bánk Bán,* which is a super-patriotic smash hit about the anti-German struggle. The objective of performing this play was summed up as follows in the program notes published in the April 14, 1942 of the *Népszava:* "Today the vanguard of the thousand-year-old Hungarian tradition of striving for freedom is the Hungarian working class and therefore it is the duty of this class to represent this striving in the most appropriate way that it can." The big hall of the ironworkers' union headquarters was filled to the rafters on opening night. As the *Népszava* wrote it in its April 20, 1942 issue, "Everyone understood the great historical truth that Katona was conveying, and a huge enthusiasm for free, independent and happy Hungary was reflected in the stormy applause." The play also was presented on the 10th and 17th of May at the Erzsébetváros Theatre in the City Park, again before packed houses. However, the police did not allow any further performances.

The trade unions, and the construction workers in particular, also took out their share of putting the peasant–worker-alliance idea into practice. The communists and the leftist social democrats started to have increasingly better ties with the progressive elements of the peasantry. The dispersion of the peasantry, its isolatedness and the ruthless terror that the rural areas were subject to made it practically impossible for the representatives of the working class and of the

peasantry to work together and for the peasant–worker alliance, now imbued with new content, to get off the ground. But, here too, the organized working class and the young workers found the way to overcome the obstacles. The young workers of the capital and the larger industrial centres and the construction workers undertook several actions in order to acquaint the working peasantry with the importance of organizing the national independence forces and to stimulate them to take part in the struggles. The construction workers' federation addressed a call to its rural organizations in early 1942 that they should relentlessly emphasize the overriding importance of cooperation and that they should take a hand in the distribution of the *Szabad Szó* (Free speech), which was the paper of the democratic peasantry. Besides the peasants, representatives of the organized workers were also present at readers' and correspondents' conferences of the *Szabad Szó,* at which the representatives of the paper and those of the National Peasant Party discussed with the delegates of the peasants what was to be done. These meetings brought the workers and the peasants closer to each other and gave life to the developing alliance.

After the start of the war against the Soviet Union, the greatest show of force on the part of the anti-fascsst forces took place on March 15, 1942, the anniversary of the 1848 bourgeois revolution for national independence. The trade unions played a major role in the preparations for it. The previously discussed economic struggles and political actions gradually prepared the trade unions for this anti-war protest. At the initiative of the communists, a legal body in charge of the details was set up in February 1942 and was called the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee. It was an anti-fascist group which included anti-Nazi politicians and social organizations. The trade unions too were represented in the Committee, by people like Miklós Somogyi and János Katona. There were various attempts to get certain unions affiliated as a body. In early March 1942 various trade unions held a preparatory conference at the headquarters of the construction workers' federation to discuss the problems involved in joining and the accompanying tasks. However, on account of the differences in views concerning this and because the government soon stepped in and put a stop to the activities of the Committee, nothing concrete ever came of the idea of having these unions join.

The communists and the leftist social democrats were not all that concerned about getting the unions to join the Historical Memorial Committee; they just figured that it would be good enough if the unions got themselves in gear to make the March 15th affair one to remember, i.e., do a proper job in the preparations and get the people out. The young workers' organizations, the social democrats' organizations and the trade unions were assigned the task of mobilizing the organized and the unorganized workers in the plants with whatever it takes and get them out to march. The communists considered it particularly important to involve great masses of industrial workers that had hitherto shown only a passive attitude.

The majority of the organized workers welcomed the plans for the March 15th

demonstration and if the news reached them, the unorganized workers felt the same way too. Pressure from the communists and the leftist social democrats and the fact that the organized workers had a positive attitude towards the demonstration, plus a number of other factors, led to the Social Democratic Party and the Trade Union Council deciding in favour of participation after some debate. Although the right-wing social-democratic leaders were opposed to the demonstration from the very start and were rather upset by the growing anti-war movement in their party and in the trade unions, on the 9th of March they had to agree to participate. Following that, preparations were proceeding in the open in the labour organizations. The communists, the leftist social democrats and the trade union leaders agreed that the workers would gather in the union halls or at the district party offices and would move from there in an orderly procession to the statue of Petőfi, a great Hungarian poet who lived at the time of the 1848 revolution and played an active part in it. The organized workers of some factories took up collections and bought wreaths and made banners.

On March 9, 1942 Horthy appointed a new government. Knowing the extent of the preparations and the expected number of participants, the new Kállay government used something even more effective than the weapon of terror; it prevented the unfolding unity of the organized workers supporting the planned demonstration. The reformist union hacks and the social-democratic functionaries, since they never did have their hearts set on the action, latched onto the Minister of the Interior's warning that the Arrow-Cross goons planned to interfere with the march. Exploiting this, Peyer and his clique got the steering committee of the Party to call the whole thing off. On the 14th and 15th of March, the *Népszava* wrote that the organized working class – in order to avoid fascist provocations – would not participate in the demonstration. This about-face on the part of the rightist social democrats cut badly into the number of participants, but failed to stop the events.

On the 14th of March the communists came up with the slogan "We'll be there anyway." Then they went to the unions, to the Party offices of the social democrats and to the factories, calling upon the workers to show up. On the 15th they did much the same thing, visiting the memorial meetings held by the unions and by the Social Democratic Party.

On the 15th of March several thousand people got together on Petőfi Square. The only group to arrive as an organized body was the two hundred men from the construction workers, led by Miklós Somogyi, but the various wreaths placed at the foot of statue indicated that other organizations were represented as well. There were wreaths from the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee, as well as ones signed "The workers of the outskirts of Budapest", "The workers of the wool laundry", "The workers of Terézváros", etc., and of course piles of flowers covered the base of the statue. Once the wreaths were placed, an outspoken anti-war demonstration got under way, with everyone marching off to the Parliament. On the way, the police charged at the crowd in the square by the Chain Bridge, scattering them and arresting ninety people.

The participation of the organized workers made that March 15, 1942 demonstration one of the major events of the anti-fascist resistance movement. Were it not for the stab-in-the-back by the Peyerists, the number of participants would have been considerably greater, as Peyer and his clique admitted. Nevertheless, even as it was, that action strengthened the position and political influence of the organized working class. Their influence grew among the unorganized and reached all of the anti-fascist elements that existed in the country, even if potentially. Seeing this, the regime started drastic counter-measures.

The size of the crowd on the 15th surprised the police and the government. For one thing, with its effect on public opinion in the country, especially on that of the working class, it thoroughly crossed the plans of the new Prime Minister. The extreme right considered it an opportune time to demand the banning of the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions. Kállay tried to repeat his pre-March 15th success and split the organized workers' growing unity. He slammed hard into the main forces behind the independence movement, i. e., the communists, the leftist social democrats and union leaders, but defended the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions in face of the attacks from the extreme right. In return, he asked for the Social Democratic Party's and the unions' rightist leaders' total loyalty and support for the government's program.

The counter-measures on the part of the government led to the disbanding of the Memorial Committee at the end of the month. In April, the government started to use the draft as a political tool to thin out the ranks of the anti-war movement. It proved a useful way of getting those leftist social democrats and union functionaries away from their contacts in the capital and in the more important industrial centres, who opposed the anti-labour measures of the military commanders of the factories under trusteeship and who were organizing against the war. The draftees, numbering between 350 and 400, were put into refractory companies located in various parts of the country, and during the first days of May they were shipped out to the front. Most of them remained true to their revolutionary outlook even in those "mobile slaughterhouses" and kept the anti-Nazi struggle going among the soldiers and Jewish draftees.[4] Those among them who were captured by the Red Army engaged in the anti-fascist education of the Hungarian prisoners of war and many of them joined the partisans.

The draft was also used by the military commanders of the factories under trusteeship, by the local leaders of the National Labour Centre[5] and by the Arrow-Cross men to harass and intimidate those workers who still declared themselves to be members of the organized working class. They always found

[4] The politically unreliable and the Jewish draftees were placed in unarmed army units, dressed in civilian clothing; there were the so-called "work details" and the people there had to do forced labour either at the front or elsewhere.

[5] A labour organization, fascist in character, established by the government in the early 20's but never gaining any importance except for the years of the war.

some excuse to pick on them, threatening them with the factory prisons (work during the day and incarceration at night) and internment, and even succeeded in forcing a number of workers to leave the union. The Minister of the Interior issued a decree on May 26th concerning the conscription of unreliable elements from the point of view of the security of the state and on the appropriate preventive measures to be taken, and this served the further persecution of the organized workers.

Among the measures initiated by the government was the closure and occupation of the workers' halls which often served as the base for anti-war organizing and, during the difficult years, as a sort of haven, giving encouragement, hope and shelter. By autumn 1942 the workers' halls in twelve working-class districts – in and around the capital and in rural areas – had been taken over partially or wholly for military reasons. As Lajos Kabók wrote in one of his letters to the Minister of the Interior, on account of the billeting, the life of the associations had come to a full stop, economic and social activities were impossible to conduct and the sources of funds had practically all dried up.

The most severe of the counter-measures was the arrest of many communists and leftist social democrats between May and July in 1942. In the capital some 500 and in the rest of the nation between 200 and 300 were taken into custody. The wave of arrest also hit the communist groups active in the unions and the leading and lower ranks of the Hungarian Party of Communists were practically destroyed.

These events panicked the organized workers and caused them to despair. Some of them demanded decisive action from the union and social-democratic party leaders, while others were so scared that they urged a retreat. The "hawks", who had all along taken umbrage at the conciliatory politics of the social-democratic leaders – as Sombor-Schweinitzer put it in his June 6, 1942 report – were saying that the fascist terror would not go away despite the Party's lielow politics and that only the blood of people willing to get down would bear the lasting fruits of revolutionary struggle. Given this situation, the attitude of the leaders of the Social Democratic Party and of the trade unions was decisive.

The situation that had developed in the wake of the revenge campaign was made even more grave by the attitudes of the rightist social-democratic party and union leaders. In their views it was the presence of the communists – and the leftist politics they were infecting everyone with – that threatened the existence of the legal labour organizations. Events seemed to support this view. Their line was that if they managed to purge the communist influence then the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions would once again be acceptable to the government. Thus the terror of the government was compounded by these hacks' anti-left witch-hunts.

First the Trade Union Council, then its steering committee at its June 2, 1942 meeting and later, on June 10th, the steering committee meeting of the Social Democratic Party, all passed resolutions condemning the leftist, popular-front politics of the Party and of the unions and assured the government of their loyalty.

Anyone opposed to the resolutions was threatened with public expulsion. In August 1942, Árpád Szakasits was dismissed as General Secretary of the Social Democratic Party because he was "too close" to the communists and "too compromised" by his cooperation with them.

The weakening of the left and the serious blow dealt to the communists made it possible for the Peyerist line to gain the upper hand. The various trade unions were all issuing calls for support of the war effort, indeed, they were calling for more production. For example, the September 4, 1942 issue of *Typographia*, the paper of the printers, summed up the tasks of the unions as follows: "The trade-union movement is not about causing disturbances and constant unease, as certain perfidious elements allege, but very much to the contrary, the unions endeavour to establish lasting industrial peace based on mutual understanding and institutional guarantees and to have a solid industrial order which is the prerequisite of steady productive labour." In 1942 Márton Alföldy in his trade-union pamphlet of those times *A szervezett ipari munkásság* (Organized industrial workers) defined the patriotism of the organized workers in the following way: "Our patriotism is proportionate to the quality and quantity of the work we produce for the nation." The rightist social democrats again emphasized the advantages of go-slow politics and urged the trade unions to only deal with internal problems and avoid interfering with national politics.

The workers, who were intimidated by the arrests, the draft and the internment camps, could not expect encouragement from their official leaders to take a militant stand. Thus, the buzzing activity that had been so much in evidence just a few months before had a temporary setback. The meetings, discussions, secretarial and other conferences became rare, in places even non-existent. This was not unrelated to the new offensive of the Germans in the summer of 1942, which did show initial successes at the Eastern front. The president of the Social Democratic Party in the Kispest district of the capital managed to capture the mood of the times, saying that "it is as if people were afraid to act and all of their energies are being eaten away by the useless arguments, fretting and self-reproach" and the labour organizations "exhaust the gloom of a tomb".

THE NEW UPSURGE IN THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STRUGGLES

At the end of 1942 and during early 1943 the Soviet Red Army achieved a resounding victory over the fascist armies at Stalingrad. Almost at the same time, the USA, British and French allied forces thrust back the enemy from Northern Africa, with the exception of Tunis. These victories had a tremendous impact on the working masses of Hungary, particularly on the working class. Furthermore, the blow dealt to the fascist coalition by the practical annihilation of the Second Hungarian Army at Voronezh, which had a direct impact on the

nation's mood, only served to increase the general effect of the events at Stalingrad and in Northern Africa. By 1943 the life of the workers was seriously deteriorating, with food, clothing and footwear becoming increasingly difficult to obtain. Whatever the workers had stocked up on during the boom caused by the burgeoning war industry, were becoming exhausted. Food ration coupons were becoming quite regular for things like bread, flour, fat, meat, potatoes, certain clothing items, footwear and fuel, all of which were decreasing rapidly in both quantity and quality. Wages were frozen, but prices were shooting sky high.

By 1943 those advantages that the workers of the bigger war plants had enjoyed at the beginning of the war had by and large petered out. The lot of the workers of the small factories was as bad as ever, but since they were not bound to their places of work in the way that the workers of war plants were[6] – at least, most of them were exempt of that situation – they could sometimes get better-paying jobs and achieve certain gains. In the large war plants the workers could not quit and go elsewhere; many of them were doing forced labour, the wages were determined at the ministerial level and various disciplinary measures were in constant force, which led to a situation that was a far cry from the workers' previous, rather favourable situation. The growing shortage of workers was combatted by increasing productivity and by lengthening the workday. The 10–12-hour workday was becoming a general phenomenon and in the mines extra shifts were introduced.

Needless to say, this increased the dissatisfaction of the workers and produced a shift to the left. The workers were becoming active again. In the spring of 1943 a general movement for higher wages started throughout the country and the workers were again getting interested in politics; this entailed that sympathy and understanding for the trade unions was on the rise, again. As a result of this trend, the situation became favourable for the communists, union activists and leftist workers to take a militant stand at their places of work. In the spring of 1943, new people took the place of the dismissed shop stewards and those who were intimidated into passivity became again active. The government's temporarily modified stand vis-à-vis the Social Democratic Party and the unions undeniably had a role in this new development, as did the growing activism of the Trade Union Council and certain union centres. What is the explanation for these changes?

In order to prevent the collapse of the regime, there were two things that the government could do: one of them was the exercise of terror, which it used indiscriminately, and the other was to win those anti-Nazi people who were also opposed to a revolution and thus, at the expense of some minor concessions, hold back the revolutionary tide. It was according to this line of thinking that Kállay allowed the unions and the union leaders in particular to become more active than

[6] The employees of factories engaged in war production were prevented by law from leaving their jobs, or seeking other work.

previously sanctioned so that they could keep control over the workers' growing economic and political struggles.

The rightist union bosses' coopting activity got under way in February 1943 at the meeting of all of the shop stewards convened at the union headquarters of the ironworkers and also at the general assembly and at the series of anniversary celebrations held to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the union. This was followed by the 25th anniversary general assembly of the miners' union in April and the regular annual general assembly of the various unions. After a lapse of several years, the trade-union groups of the major rural towns also received permission to convene meetings of the leaders of the union locals. Joint meetings of various trades were held during May and June in many towns. In some of the big war plants such as the Iron Works at Diósgyőr, permission was given for union mass meetings.

These meetings were always eagerly anticipated not only by the union members but also by those workers who belonged to the extreme-right organizations or who were unorganized. This is easily understandable if we keep in mind the serious defeats suffered by the Germans and their allies and the forced stoppage of union meetings that had lasted for years. The police and gendarme reports of the meetings all reported that the workers were looking forward to and demanding a militant mass line from their leaders. The chief-of-police of Diósgyőr reported that before one of the meetings such excitement grabbed hold of the workers that he simply could neither explain nor understand it.

The leaders of the unions – Peyer, Kabók, etc. – tried to get to as many meetings as possible, where they were the main speakers. They resorted to demagoguery, sharply attacking the extreme right, the Arrow-Cross movement and the politics of the rightist labour organizations. And they let the government have it too, lambasting their economic policies and expressing their no-confidence in Kállay's leadership. Once they had got the crowd, they started to roast the left, attacking the developing and radical nation-wide struggle for better wages, the talk of strikes and the political demands. They suggested that the workers should write memoranda and petitions to the managers of the factories, to the ministers and to other government bodies regarding their grievances. They kept emphasizing that they had received promises that the workers' complaint would be heard and that the just demands would be complied with, so there was no need to resort to means that were banned by the authorities because that would only work to the detriment of the improving relationship between the government and the trade unions and make circumstances more difficult for Kállay. Peyer's article in the April 15, 1943 issue of the *Magyar Szakszervezeti Értesítő* (Hungarian trade-union bulletin) which defined that speakers were to say at union meetings, stated that "It will be the masses, fully conscious of their reponsibilities, which know that prosperity can only be attained through work and only if everyone does his duty, that will decide on its own fate, and not the unruly loud mouths, immature and without experience".

These union hacks were willing to lead delegations to the ministries over and

over again, but quite drastically they squashed all actions which would have given expression to the workers' demands and anti-war and anti-German feelings in a militant fashion such as through strikes or demonstrations. Strikes for better wages or expressions of anti-war sentiment initiated by a factory or a trade, were prevented by the rightist union leaders from becoming nation wide, from sparking off other actions and from strengthening the workers' solidarity. It was in this way that these leaders made it impossible for the workers to realize the tremendous potential inherent in a mass movement. Thus, the workers' struggles for better wages as well as other forms of activity undertaken by them at various points of the country during 1943 remained isolated from one another and were purely local affairs.

In the spring of 1943 the miners' situation was the worst. Their growing disenchantment was undoubtedly also fuelled by the Arrow-Cross people in order to create problems for the government and to get the Germans to intervene and remove Kállay. However, significant positive changes had taken place among the miners. They shifted to the left at an extraordinarily rapid pace. Interest in their union was high. The April 1943 anniversary public meeting of the miners' union, at which every mining area was represented, was the starting point for the revitalization of the locals and for the establishment of new ones. In every case, either communists or leftist workers were elected to leadership. As a result of this rapid development, in the autumn of 1943 a district secretariat was set up in Pécs, a major town and mining centre in Southern Hungary, which coordinated all of the mining union locals in that area. The first major rally of all miners took place on October 17, 1943 at Bánhida, with over six hundred participants. The Arrow-Cross goons tried to break up the meeting, but failed. On January 1, 1944 over a thousand miners rallied in support of the union at the Sárisáp miners' meeting. All of the mining areas were represented at that major assembly which was also a political demonstration against the pro-Hitler line of the government. The establishment of a central miners' committee in the Hungarian Party of Communists at the end of 1943, which coordinated, organized and directed the miners' resistance movement, played a significant role in the growing political activism of the miners.

This activism was closely related to their economic struggles; starting in March 1943, a nation-wide wage struggle developed among the miners. The miners of Pécs, Tata and Nógrád followed each other in handing a list of demands to the managements, pointing out that they would strike in case the response was not satisfactory. An organic aspect of this was the May 1st work stoppage of the Pécs miners, the strikes at several small pits, the refusals to work extra shifts, etc.

Despite the tremendous and widespread discontent of the miners, strikes were rare. In addition to the law banning all strikes in the war production factories, there was also the factor of the absence of a unified direction of the movement for higher wages and this greatly contributed to the paucity of strikes. The leaders of the miners' union at the highest levels opposed even the notion of striking while the leaders at the local level were cautious of despotism and were uncertain of the

extent of support they could expect from other miners in case of a strike. Thus, by resorting to a combination of disciplinary measures and concessions, giving minor pay hikes and satisfying in part some of the other demands, it was relatively easy for the owners of the mines to prevent an entire series of strikes, which could have become the starting point for the political mobilization of the mine workers. During the second half of 1943, the economic struggles and the various political actions remained only local affairs which were isolated from one another.

In addition to the struggle for better wages, sabotage played a significant role in the miners' offensive, which took the form of slowdowns and mass absenteeism. One report concerning Tatabánya, a main mining area in northern Hungary, said that the miners "go as slow as possible whenever possible". By the spring of 1943 there was an obvious drop in production, especially at two mines, Várpalota and Oroszlány. In October there was a total drop of 15,000 tons of coal due to sabotage. This meant that not only the light industry started to feel the pinch but heavy industry as well. Certain, from the war effort's point of view, key factories were also starting to have serious production difficulties. In other words, these actions on the part of the miners were very important from the anti-war struggle's point of view.

The struggle for higher wages spread to the war industry. In the autumn of 1942 and spring 1943 there were a number of reports of the workers' demanding better pay in places such as the Ganz Electric Machine, Train and Ship Building Factory, the Weiss Manfréd plant at Csepel, several textile factories in Budapest, the Láng Machine Factory, and all of the major factories of the capital. Factories in the rural towns soon followed suit. In eight major rural towns, the workers of the factories demanded pay increases and improved conditions. They were led by communists and local union leaders. In several places there were strikes and demonstrations.

The movement was the strongest at Diósgyőr, which was the second biggest industrial area of the nation. The workers of the area were well organized and the local union leaders were willing to go to bat for the workers in spite of Peyer and his clique. After several months of struggling for better wages, things came to a turning point on the 28th of May. On that day close to one thousand workers marched to the directors' office demanding a pay increase and stating their intention to strike on the 10th of June if the bosses did not come across. Things got temporarily quieted down by the government promising to look into it and by the Peyer clique, but on September 9th, – due to the influence of the Italian army's capitulation the former day and because the promised pay increases and other benefits were only carried out in part – a new demonstration broke out with nearly two thousand workers participating. This demonstration was also quite clearly an anti-war protest.

A few days before the above events, on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of September, there was a strike by the five thousand workers of the biggest war industrial plant, the Weiss Manfréd Works; this strike was led by communists, local union leaders and the factory's chief shop steward.

International developments, the new upsurge in the struggle for higher wages and the fact that in the majority of the cases the local union leaders were all participating in the workers' actions greatly contributed to the fact of growing activity and membership of the unions. The local leaders' involvement was far from being approved of by the central leadership and in most cases the latter moved against the former. That was the case at Csepel and Diósgyőr. Demonstrations and strikes were not the rightist union bosses' bag. They were afraid that the masses would get radicalized and they would not be able to do anything about it. They feared for the legal status of the unions and kept saying that the mass movements might provoke a German intervention. According to them, the unions should just busy themselves by getting more people organized and getting prepared for the foreseen social changes. Peyer and his clique kept saying that the Germans had lost the war and that it was only a matter of time before the organized working class was able to participate in the post-war division of power: mass movements could only lead to the destruction of the trade unions and to anarchy. They would prevent Hungary from fulfilling the policing role in Central Europe that certain Western government circles had in mind for her. Furthermore, it would be impossible for Hungary to retain those territories which were regained at the start of the war. It cannot be denied that these "play safe" politics based on patience, strongly nationalistic and anti-Soviet, were popular among certain circles of the organized working class.

The communists and leftist leaders in the unions, partly on account of the campaign of terror against them, could not bring about such a qualitative change in the mood and struggle of the workers, which would have been necessary to make the Hungarian proletariat an organic part of the world-wide struggle against fascism. Therefore, in addition to organizing and urging on the economic struggle and acts of sabotage, they were also very involved in areas which enjoyed the support of the Peyer clique and to which the government was not opposed either, but which nevertheless were an opportunity to expand the ranks of the left and to increase the workers' preparedness to struggle. Some of these areas of activity were union membership drives, *Népszava* subscription drives and organizing so-called leadership courses.

In the autumn of 1943 the Trade Union Council announced a general membership drive for all unions to last one month. The organized workers, leftist social democrats and the communists considered this to be in their common interest and particularly in the rural areas they tied this campaign in with propaganda concerning the need to defend the unions against the government. The membership drive was in effect the start of the rebirth of some unions. By the end of 1943, some fifteen and a half thousand new members were signed up in spite of the fact that being a member of a union, especially in the rural areas, could always mean reprisals from the plants' military commander and from the local fascists. This growth of the unions was in most cases matched by an increasing radicalization. In the elected or re-elected local leaderships, the left became stronger in every case since they were the ones leading the drives and the actions

serving the workers' interests. The *Népszava* drive brought similar results and the unions participated in that too. At the end of the drive they got more than ten thousand new subscribers.

It was also at the end of 1943 that with the government's permission the so-called leadership courses were got under way in the various unions' county or lower level organizations. Peyer and his clique saw these courses as a good way to develop the necessary cadre for the various levels of leadership that they expected to befall the unions after the war. The courses were set up in fifty-eight locations with between three and four thousand people participating in them. Most of the lecturers and local directors of these courses were leftist social democrats and even communists. The participants, especially in the rural areas, were people who were willing to risk the consequences of attending the course because the police required the names and other data of all those present. Contrary to the intentions of Peyer and his clique, talk of immediate tasks and problems outweighed discussions about the future.

The contact with the organized workers that the courses and the various union meetings afforded the leftist leaders of the unions, compelled them to be more outspoken and bold in their actions. These contacts were only strengthening during the end of 1943 and early 1944 and this led to the deepening of the contradictions between them and the rightist leaders.

In October 1943, at the ironworkers' union meeting, the Diósgyőr people opposed the way the steering committee was made up because, according to them, they were all yes-men for Kabók and his clique. They demanded that the committee should be expanded to include the representatives of the rural organizations, themselves included, but Kabók and his followers managed to sidestep the issue.

During early 1944 the conflict between the union shop stewards and the Peyer clique continued. In January and February the Arrow-Cross goon squads launched several attacks on the offices, meetings and leaders of the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions. This stirred the workers to take counter-measures, but Peyer and his people were not willing to go beyond threats. The meeting of the shop stewards of the iron-industry workers became a forum for the expression of profound dissatisfaction on the part of most participants, who were demanding a more resolute stand by the leaders of the Social Democratic Party and the unions in opposition to the fascists and the government. Some of the speakers at that meeting said that the working class should exert pressure on the government to initiate negotiations with the Soviet Union. The rightist union leaders present ordered the hall marshalls to clear the room as the debate was getting quite heated. Following this, meetings were organized in three working-class districts of the capital without the knowledge of the rightist leaders. At those meetings people spoke free and easy, attacking in no uncertain terms the politics of the government and the union leadership. The local leaders of the Csepel district wanted to organize a meeting of all of the workers of that industrial heartland for the 19th of March, but they were prevented from

doing so by the German occupation of Hungary. The local meetings on the 15th of March and the celebrations that were being organized to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of Louis Kossuth, leader of the 1848–1849 revolution and War of Independence, were also indicative of a growing process of radicalization; these celebrations, however, never did materialize due to the occupation.

In some of the mining areas, the communists – with the knowledge of the local union leaders and under the direction of the mining committees – organized "propaganda of the deed" action groups, in order to prepare for a more effective type of resistance. The rightist leaders of the miners' union again threatened to expel from the federation anyone involved.

By way of summing up, we can say that by the spring of 1944, albeit slowly, the Peyerist line was beginning to lose its influence in the trade unions; this line was essentially designed to turn the working class into a political base for Kállay and his efforts to save the crumbling system.

In the spring of 1944 the situation had become critical in Hungary. The Soviet Red Army was at the Carpathian mountains. Kállay's opportunist politics of playing both sides of the fence was becoming impossible due to the pressures from Hitler and the domestic extreme right. On March 19, 1944, the troops of fascist Germany occupied Hungary.

The occupation could have been avoided, or at least its consequences modified, had the government been willing to make a clean break with Hitler. The majority of the working class and primarily the organized workers would in all likelihood have responded to a call of the government or of the labour leaders to resist the Germans in the spring of 1944. There would also have been people in the other classes and strata of society, especially among the poor and middle peasantry, who would have participated in the resistance. The armed forces, despite the pro-German sentiment of the majority of the officer corps, could have been thrown in against the Germans and it would have meant a rather serious obstacle to the latter. All this was recognized by Zoltán Tildy, the leader of the Independent Small-Holders' Party, and even Kállay himself and is also supported by the memoirs of other contemporaries. In other words, the combined resistance of the working class, the armed forces, and other social forces would have given the German military leaders a serious strategic problem. But, of course, Kállay was not about to resist, a stand which he later rationalized as follows: "We could have rid the nation of the Germans by ourselves, but not of the Russians." In effect, not only the bourgeois anti-Hitler forces were inactive, but so were the leaders of the working class and the peasantry. The German military occupation was a severe blow to the workers and their organizations.

THE GERMAN OCCUPATION

The SS and Gestapo forces which came in with the German army started a liquidation campaign against the communists and all anti-fascists on the basis of a list compiled by their Hungarian agents. All leftist parties, even bourgeois

organizations too, were banned. The *Népszava* was shut down and its editorial offices were ransacked and totally vandalized by the Germans. A pro-German government, under the leadership of Döme Sztójay, was installed.

The fate of the trade unions was still uncertain during the first few days following the occupation. Almost everywhere, their offices were occupied by either the Gestapo or by the National Labour Centre. The persecution and arrest of union functionaries was extensive, particularly in the rural areas. The number of those arrested was close to a thousand.

One of the measures of the Sztójay government was to legally sanction the Gestapo conducted arrests and the banning of the leftist parties, organizations and publications. On the pretext of anti-Semitic measures, new restrictions were placed on labour organizations and particularly on local leaders, especially by the local administration authorities. At the same time they further corrupted the more backward elements of the working class by distributing among them some of the confiscated possessions of the Jewish people.

Organizing a resistance movement was extremely difficult given the brutal terror, the demagoguery and the complete unpreparedness for such an occupation on the part of the leftist opposition parties and organizations, including the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions. Needless to say, never before was there a greater need for the mobilization of the entire nation and especially of the working class. The Communist Party, which since June 1943 was operating under the name Peace Party, addressed a call to the Hungarian nation on the day of the German occupation, urging the initiation of a struggle for freedom and an armed national resistance. "Workers, peasants, soldiers, citizens, students! Organize the national resistance, form combat groups! [Organize] in the factories, in the mines, in your places of work..."[7] The communists had immediately sought to establish contact with the leaders of the banned parties and organizations, who had gone underground, urging that the parties and the organizations be reconstituted on a clandestine basis and that a joint military directorate be organized to lead the national resistance. As a result of these talks, in May 1944 the Hungarian Front was established, which included the communists, the left wing of the social democrats, the Independent Small-Holders' Party, the National Peasant Party and a few bourgeois groups. They called for a people's war against the Nazis and their Hungarian toadies. The Front's call contained a separate appeal to the working class: "Workers! The Hungarian Front summons you to battle. You are the greatest and most conscious organized force in the nation. You manufacture the war materials, mine the coal, make the trains and ships go. The fate of the fascists and traitors is in your hands! Don't produce for the Germans... Destroy and sabotage!"[8] This call was signed by the

[7] *Dokumentumok a magyar forradalmi munkásmozgalom történetéből, 1935–1945* (Documents on the history of the Hungarian revolutionary working-class movement, 1935–1945). Budapest, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1964, vol. III., p. 494. (Henceforth *Dokumentumok*...)

[8] Op. cit. pp. 509–510.

two labour parties, the Social Democratic Party and the Peace Party, but the leaders of the trade unions refused to comply.

Despite the demands of the Arrow-Cross people, of the leaders of the National Labour Centre and of the local authorities, the Sztójay government did not ban the trade unions, because it was afraid of the resistance of the workers. In this respect, it followed the example of its predecessors and had the consent of the Germans in the matter. On March 26, 1944 a few days after the formation of the Sztójay government, the Secretary of State for Industrial Affairs held talks with the leaders of the trade unions, primarily with Kabók, who became the president of the Trade Union Council after Peyer's arrest by the Gestapo when the Germans occupied Hungary.

The Kabók clique had hoped all along after the German occupation that the government would make an exception in the case of the trade unions and leave them alone since in the course of the years past the unions had given ample indication of the fact that they were the willing tools of the ensured continuity and growth of production as long as leadership remained in the hands of the right wing. Although some union functionaries had suggested that the unions, as a movement, should go underground after the military occupation, the top leadership rejected the idea. The leaders of the various unions, the shop stewards of important industrial plants, who went in daily to the ironworkers' headquarters and who had expected leadership from the Trade Union Council, were left in total uncertainty even after the occupation. The Council made the unions and many functionaries and union rank-and-filers just sit around and wait, which sometimes had the tragic consequence of their getting arrested.

On March 22nd, the Trade Union Council empowered its presidium to do all it could in order to maintain the legal status of the trade unions. This in effect gave Kabók and his group the necessary authority to enter into negotiations with the government and also to act in support of the Sztójay government and the German occupation authorities. The outcome of the negotiations between the government and the Trade Union Council, held from the 27th to the 31st of March, was that the trade unions were placed under government trusteeship but were allowed to retain certain aspects of their autonomy, received the government's promise that those arrested would be released, the workers' meeting halls would be returned to their jurisdiction, that the union members would have freedom of movement and so on. In return, the trade-union leaders promised that the unions would support the government, overcome the workers' likely resistance and ensure uninterrupted production. The union bosses delivered on their promises, but the government welched on theirs. Most of the arrested union functionaries remained in custody, in fact more were arrested, and by May there were various attempts at the liquidation of the unions' autonomy.

The position of the unions' leaders, their constant pushing for more production, the rejection of even the idea of resistance all meant the betrayal of the cause of the working class and a stab-in-the-back of the resistance forces and it played a significant role in keeping the organized working class from joining the

anti-German struggle. Most of the union leaders either did not understand, or if they did, then they refused to recognize the fact that the conditions guaranteed for them served only the German's aims, that is, the unions were allowed to retain their legal status only because in that way the Germans got steady production. The union leaders were still lulling themselves with the illusion that they would be able "to maintain the unions' legal status and existing condition. After all, the war will soon be over, and if they manipulate things right then the unions will survive intact." This is how Pál Schiffer characterized the situation of the time.[9]

The illusion was all the more harmful since most of the leftist union leaders, especially at the level of the locals, were arrested and taken to prison, internment camp, concentration camp, or murdered. Thus the fear of arrest on the part of the workers was joined by Kabók's policy of "wait and see", which was proven such a disaster already in March.

The communists and the leftist social democrats were in agreement that the possibilities for action afforded by the legality of the unions had to be exploited and that they had to join the fight for the unions' right to exist and for the return of their offices to them, even under the German occupation. However, and this was their rider, only in so far as this was to the advantage of the resistance movement. At the same time they were pushing for the organization of an illegal union network on the plant level, which, according to them, would have to become eventually the *de facto* leader and organizer of the resistance. The leaflet of the Peace Party, issued after the negotiations between the unions and the government – once the treasonous politics of the trade-union leaders became obvious – took a very clear stand on this question.

"The occupation army does not feel confident of its power in Hungary. It did not dare to openly attack the trade-union movement because it feared the strength of the organized workers. Workers! Don't quit the unions before the enemy has taken them over! Don't let the unions fall into the hands of the Germans, who will use force or smuggle in the Arrow-Cross traitors or their Labour Centre lackeys or will have the aid of certain union leaders' betrayal! Punish all traitors!

Workers! The only way that you can fight against the German occupying force is by organizing underground (illegal) factory and trade organizations! Take your places in the vanguard of the national resistance!"[10]

However, the trade-union leaders maintained their former position; indeed, in the interest of their own personal safety, they seemed willing to make further concessions.

In May 1944 the government decided that it would try to win the agreement of the trade-union leaders, do away with the autonomy of the unions and with the support of the rightist labour organizations set up the Labour Chamber. Several

[9] As quoted in Elek Karsai's article *Két Magyarország* (Two Hungaries) in the March 1965 issue of *Kortárs* (Contemporary).

[10] *Dokumentumok*... p. 497.

rounds of negotiations were held at the Ministry of Industry with not only the rightist labour organizations participating, but also a ten-member delegation from the Trade Union Council, led by Kabók. Although he did raise several objections to the plan, Kabók was willing to go along with the idea of creating an umbrella organization over all of the labour organizations, which would also have room for the representatives of the Trade Union Council and which would coexist with the unions' autonomy. In return for the latter being allowed to exist, Kabók again promised to maintain uninterrupted production.

The government wanted to get the Trade Union Council's acceptance of its plan at all costs and therefore the negotiations continued, but in the meantime even those union papers that were still being published were shut down as of May 26th (*Magyar Szakszervezeti Értesítő, Vas- és Fémmunkások Lapja, Typographia, Litographia* and the *Könyvkötők Lapja*), and even the Trade Union Council was in danger of getting disbanded. The Council's presidium objected, saying that "the Trade Union Council, as the central organ of the various organizations, is always urging through them the workers to maintain labour discipline and increase production. This we had done effectively even during the war years..."[11] On July 14th, the government's decree on setting up a united labour organization, the National Federation of Hungarian Industrial Workers, was published, which aimed to organize the Hungarian proletariat into fascist corporations.

Kabók and his group probably would have accepted even this, had it not excluded the members of the Trade Union Council from the leadership and primarily from the fourteen-member leading committee of the National Federation. The decree had made it very clear that the committee could not include such union representatives who were engaged in politics or who were paid employees of a union, i.e., only people who worked in factories, etc. were eligible. At the same time as the above decree, the government announced that it was taking over the labour exchange system from the unions. In response, the Peyerist union leaders sabotaged the elections to the interest representing organ and participation in it. The stand of the trade-union leaders in this matter played a significant role in building the resistance of the organized workers to the intended fascist factory steering committees, i.e., the election and functioning of the local corporative bodies. But the biggest share of the credit for boycotting the fascist labour organizations belongs to the communists.

The efforts of the communists contributed to the fact that the trade unions were slowly becoming active again. In several plants, they were even considering the creation of illegal trade and factory organizations. The communists exposed the opportunism of Kabók and his clique and they tried to dispel the illusions created by the union bosses and get the organized workers to fight. The first signs of success appeared in May 1944 when the majority of the miners in Pécs celebrated May Day by not showing up for work. The number of absentees

[11] Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa Levéltára (Archives of the National Council of Trade Unions), 1945/3.

("goldbrickers") grew enormously. Production was steadily declining, despite the repercussions. One of the factors was constant bombing, but the military commanders of the factories were also forced to conclude that this was partly also just an excuse to leave the place of work or to refuse the work. The Ministry of Defense had to keep issuing order after order, announce new punitive sanctions and give out rewards in order to reestablish labour discipline. There were a few instances of major sabotage such as on April 9, 1944, when at the Hungária Chemical and Smelting Works five hundred wagons of vital raw materials were destroyed by fire.

The boycotting of the factory steering committees gave fresh impetus to the resistance movement. The elections of these committees were held at the end of June and in early July in most factories. The authorities expected these committees to smash the trade unions, tighten labour discipline, increase production and that they would be a source of strong support for the military commanders and managers of the plants. In most cases only those individuals who were approved by the military commanders of the factories were eligible to run for election to the plant steering committees, and in most cases the organized workers' candidates were rejected outright. The communists addressed a call to the workers: "Protest in every way necessary against the unwanted labour organizations and the nationalization of the labour exchange. Defend the shop steward system and the free trade unions."[12]

In several places not only the organized but the unorganized workers too refused to vote for the official candidates, with only a negligible minority doing so, and the rest either boycotted the elections or voted for someone else with a write-in.

For example, according to official data, at the Hoffher-Schrantz factory, which held its elections on June 30th, 52.4 per cent of the eligible voters did not vote and only 43 per cent of the ballots cast were valid. The official record of the election was laconic but highly revealing in stating that most of the members of the previously existing left-wing organization did not vote. At the Weiss Manfréd Works the date of the election was at first postponed, then dropped altogether because the authorities feared a total fiasco. At the Precision Tool and Machine Factory and at the Svéd factory, the workers' write-in candidates won the election.

The fiasco, plighting the government, continued when the plant steering committees began their work. The workers' lack of confidence could not be dispelled, although they tried hard. The National Federation of Industrialists was forced to conclude in an internal circular that at certain companies, the institution of these committees actually interfered with production, rather than ensured peaceful labour. It was therefore proposed that the workers' interest toward the institution should be increased. If the workers' lack of confidence diminished with time as it usually does in the case of any new institutions, it was possible that

[12] *Béke és Szabadság* (Peace and freedom), July 1944.

a favourable basis would develop for this institution to live up to expectations as one ensuring labour tranquility. It was noted with regret that at several companies the majority of the workers did not regard the elected as their representatives and thus they were reluctant to join in the work of the steering committees.

In most cases the members of the steering committees did not carry out the wishes of the military commanders of the plants but rather, they supported the workers' demands for better food and higher wages and protested the measures that did not serve the workers' interests. The managers of the mines had all reported that despite all orders to the contrary, the steering committees were not willing to do anything about the declining production and the increasingly slack labour discipline, indeed, they were culprits in by-passing the military commanders of the plants in sending petitions and memoranda to the Ministry of Industrial Affairs. The failure of the government's scheme in establishing the steering committees forced a retreat on its part and in August 1944 the measures designed to restrict the activities of the trade unions were modified.

The leaders of the trade unions were gradually becoming more active, but of course they were still determined to remain within lawful bounds. They urged the local organizations to forward the workers' demands in the form of memoranda to the Trade Union Council which would pass them on to the Ministry. This was the background to the major petition of the workers of the Weiss Manfréd Works, in which they listed their grievances and expressed their hopes for fast and effective relief from the government.

In the summer of 1944 these petitions only served to let off steam for the workers but nothing whatsoever was really done in their interest. Most of the leaders of the Trade Union Council were well aware of this, but that was all they wanted anyway. However, in the local organizations and in the factories, the preparation of the petitions and the collecting of signatures gave the shop stewards a greater freedom of movement to get the workers interested in the union and the steering committees too became involved in this work. By the end of September and early October, the steering committees had become completely useless from the point of view of what they had been set up for originally and the Arrow-Cross Party disbanded them after October 15. The outlines of an organized resistance were becoming noticeable behind the movement of the shop stewards and leaders of the union locals for better conditions for the workers. Among these leaders on the local level there were more and more communists and workers who agreed with the ideas of the communists, people who were in favour of the resistance movement and who actually did take part in sabotage actions.

ON THE THRESHOLD OF LIBERATION

In the course of August and September 1944, the core of an illegal trade and plant organization, proposed by the communists, was established in several factories. These organizations played an important role later on in the protection

of the factories, in the refusal to obey commands to vocate them. In some places there were even armed actions. In the summer and early autumn of 1944 illegal factory organizations were established in the main industrial areas of the capital, in its vicinity, in the rural industrial centres and in the mines. These were led by communists and in most cases the unions' locals were also represented in them. During the autumn of 1944 it was clear that the resistance movement was becoming better organized. Before dawn on the 23rd of August, 1944 the magnesium stock pile of the Weiss Manfréd plant was blown up. Production at the Telephone Factory decreased by 84 per cent over a short period of time. Acts of sabotage were discovered at the quarry in Kőbánya. In the Hoffher factory 30 per cent of the workers stayed away during the month of September.

Resistance was becoming particularly strong in the mining areas, where the mining authorities were complaining of a 50 per cent drop in production. In September 1944 the police arrested at Tatabánya an armed band which was in contact with captured Red Army soldiers.

The organized workers of the iron factory at Diósgyőr, over two thousand of them, marched to the administration building of the plant on September 21st and demanded withdrawal from the war. "Peace! Germans out! Death to the German occupation forces!" were the slogans of the communists, which were heard in many factories around the nation at the time.

By September the leaders of the Trade Union Council, the so-called Committee-of-Seven, had also recognized that members of the trade unions were engaged in distributing communist leaflets, but they protested against their contents and tried to keep their organizations from becoming involved in the actions that the leaflets had called for. They were still trying to protect the legality of their organizations and the welfare of their cadre. But even in their immediate circles there were people by that time who were no longer willing to listen to "words of wisdom". There were more and more people in the leaderships of important unions (the construction, iron, leather and mining workers') who were willing to follow the call of the communists and the leftist social democrats to join the resistance.

In September 1944 the Communist Party and the Hungarian Front were both strengthened and the talks between the two labour parties concerning cooperation and long-term unification were quite promising. Efforts were made to involve the leaders of the trade unions in these talks. Negotiations were held between the Hungarian Front and the Regent's advisors, and later with Horthy himself. A further event of tremendous significance which had a great bearing on the situation was that the Soviet Red Army entered Hungary and began its liberation.

The Communist Party called on the people to rise up in arms. The Hungarian Front supported that call and tried to win Horthy and the armed forces over to the anti-war cause and arm the working class. The talks between the communists and the social democrats concerned ways of getting the organized workers and, through them, all the workers of the factories to join the armed resistance, to set

up a workers' militia and to turn the factories into the bases of the armed insurrection. In this regard, both parties agreed that the trade unions were to have a key role to play. The representatives of the two labour parties agreed that they would use the Committee-of-Seven of the Trade Union Council to mobilize the trade unions and set up the plant committees, the task of which was "to immediately organize strikes and demonstrations to back the workers' economic demands, to increase acts of sabotage and destruction, to prepare for a general strike and to immediately start to establish the framework of the workers' militia on the plant and on the trade levels".[13]

On August 29, 1944, Horthy appointed a new government under Géza Lakatos for the express purpose of concluding a separate peace with the allies.

Due to the greater freedom of movement granted to the unions by the new government, it would have been possible for the leaders to mobilize the various trade unions and their plant and rural organizations. Had the leaders of the trade unions been willing to carry that out, not only could the various resistance centres have been united but also there could have been resistance groups organized in every one of the factories where the communists could not go because of the severe restrictions placed on them. That would have tremendously multiplied and extended the working-class base of the resistance struggle. However, the Committee-of-Seven, referring once again to the need to preserve the unions' legality, rejected the two parties' suggestions concerning the trade unions' involvement and it was willing to participate neither in the work of the Hungarian Front, nor in the preparations for the general strike, nor in organizing demonstrations and the armed insurrection. Thus, the agreement that was signed by the communists and the social democrats on October 10, 1944, was neither accepted nor signed by the trade-union leaders.[14]

Therefore, it was decided that the above plan would have to reach the factories by way of the illegal network of the communists and by the leaflets that were to be distributed calling for a general strike on October 17 and for armed insurrection. However, the preparations were disturbed by Horthy's proclamation on the 15th of October. He announced a truce, but without the necessary political and, even more important, military preparations, which meant that in a matter of hours power had passed completely into the hands of the Germans and their Hungarian lackeys, the Arrow Cross goons. The following day, in exchange for safe passage for himself and his family, Horthy turned over the government to the leader of the Arrow Cross Party, Ferenc Szálasi.

Following the ascent to power by the Arrow Cross goons, the nation was enveloped in the final but terrible and bloody death throes of fascism breathing its last in Hungary. Szálasi immediately announced a total mobilization and national effort. All citizens between the ages of fourteen and seventy were drafted into labour details. They wanted to step-up the draft. An order was issued for the

[13] *Dokumentumok*... p. 564.
[14] See the study by Kálmán Szakács in the present volume.

confiscation and shipment to Germany of the factories' machinery, the nation's stock of gold and silver, all trains, all livestock and generally everything of value that could be moved and shipped. All factories, bridges and public buildings were to be mined and blown up and the population was to be deported from all "danger zones". In November, all political prisoners and most of the Jews of Budapest were turned over to the Germans. These people were taken to extermination camps, where most of them were killed before the war ended. In other words, the Szálasi rule was synonymous with the diabolic plan for the destruction of the country.

In all practical terms, the unions had found it impossible to function as a result of the fascist terror. The politics of the right-wing trade-union bosses, which opposed all illegal organizing, any contact with the Hungarian Front and all resistance activities, now made it impossible for the unions to join in the struggle against the Nazis and local fascists on an organized, centrally directed basis. The Arrow Cross goons showed no compassion even for those union leaders who were all along in favour of cooperation with the government.

After the Arrow Cross Party took over the government, the Committee-of-Seven fell apart. Contact between the resistance movement and the organized working class was maintained and developed through the illegal organizations of the communists and the leftist social democrats.

The Communist Party issued an open letter on the most important tasks:

1. The organization of the armed national resistance and the partisan war.

2. The protection of cities and towns, factories and public utilities and the prevention of destruction by the Nazis.

The concrete tasks were summed up as follows: All workers should get in touch with their drafted colleagues and acquaintances and try to win them and through them as many soldiers as possible to support the anti-fascist effort. Resistance committees should be established in every factory and trade union. These committees should get the bravest and politically most conscious workers organized into a factory defense group. These defense groups should be ready at all times to go to the defense of the factories and of the capital or join one of the partisan groups.

In many places the workers decided on the tasks facing them on the basis of communist leaflets, or they just followed their own class instinct. These tasks were as follows: the cities and towns were to be protected, the places of work defended, the nation's wealth was to be prevented from being stolen, and so on. In several places factory defense groups were organized to protect the factories and the population.

During early November, the Liberation Committee of the Hungarian National Uprising was formed, with Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky as its president. The participants were the parties in the Hungarian Front, the Liberation Front of Hungarian Youth, which was under communist leadership, several illegal bourgeois intellectual resistance groups, and a few Horthyist politicians and high ranking officers. The main objective of the Committe was to organize the armed

insurrection and the going over to the Red Army. A central role was assigned to the workers' militia groups that were being formed and so the resistance committees and defense groups of the factories, some of which had already been established. Concrete assistance was given by the auxiliary police forces, which were established mainly in the working-class districts. From anti-Nazi officers and mainly from reservists, the workers in the auxiliary police obtained arms and ammunition and then, by joining the military and exploiting the legality of that cover, they gradually turned them into bases of the armed struggle against the Nazis. In several instances their members participated in armed conflict. Unfortunately, the Liberation Committee could not carry out its plans because at the end of 1944 its leaders were arrested and many of them were executed.

From that point on, the central leadership of the resistance was the exclusive responsibility of the Communist Party. Where the lines of communication were broken, the communists and the organized workers continued to work on the basis of previous instructions. Most of the partisans active on the outskirts of the capital were trade-union members, including many communists. At Miskolc there was the Mokan group, at Sárisáp the miners became partisans under the leadership of János Zgyerka and there was the partisan group led by Sándor Nógrádi – all the people included in these groups were trade-union members. The Committee-of-Thirteen in Csepel, which directed the local workers' resistance and which was trying to establish contact with the Red Army, was also a union-based group. Although those groups that participated in the struggle for the liberation of the country did fight heroically, the fact must nevertheless be mentioned that the Hungarian workers and Hungarian people did not resist fascism on a scale anywhere near that of other European countries.

The organized workers were much more active in the struggle to prevent the factories from being dismantled and shipped to Germany. They did every effort to prevent their destruction and the deportation of the population, especially of skilled workers. Together with the left-wing functionaries of the trade unions, the communists carried out extensive propaganda work among the Hungarian workers and technical intelligentsia concerning ways of defeating the plans of the fascists. This work of the communists was organized from two angles. One was in the factories; with the cooperation of the established resistance committees and defense groups and the second was by using the anti-German capitalists, or just those who did not particularly care to see their factories completely wrecked. In a few instances the two angles could be successfully joined, particularly in the capital.

The brave resistance of the workers of Csepel saved not only the Weiss Manfréd factory from destruction but also the people of the island from getting deported – and the accompanying horrors. It was to the credit of the organized workers that the capital's many factories and other important works (like gas, electricity, etc.), that is, their machinery and vital parts, were saved.

The Mokan group saved the population and the equipment of the factories in Miskolc. At Diósgyőr, the workers loaded useless machinery aboard the trains

going to Germany. The workers of the iron factory at Ózd hid the vital equipment of the plant. The miners of Salgótarján resisted their deportation and the destruction of the mine by staying in the shaft for a few days. At Pécs, the workers of the leather factory managed to save seventy wagons of leather goods. The resistance of the railroad workers kept enormous amounts of wealth from reaching Germany. And so on.

This struggle of the Hungarian workers was not without danger. Many workers, trade-union members and leaders paid with their lives. The Arrow Cross goons, the armed national service, the Gestapo, and the units of the Wehrmacht terrorized the people while carrying out their plans for the nation's destruction. "We are not going to drag the saboteurs from Pontius to Pilate", wrote the Arrow Cross rag, *Összetartás* (Unity), in November 1944. "We are not going to write up piles of reports. If sabotage is obvious beyond doubt, the guilty will be executed on the spot".

The Soviet army, receiving support from allied Romanian and Hungarian military forces and from Hungarian patriots, fought for over half a year a bitter and bloody battle, at the end of which it succeeded in ridding the nation of the stubbornly resisting, large and well-equipped fascist hordes and in April 1945 it liberated Hungary.

When in the liberated areas the work of clearing the ruins was begun and production and a new life were started, it was those communists and organized workers in the lead who had understood and proved by concrete action already during the war years that German fascism and its Hungarian lackeys could only be defeated by armed struggle. They were the people who sabotaged production during the war, who organized the resistance, who participated in the armed struggle and organized and led the defense of the factories. History showed that the right-wing trade-union leaders' insistence on defending the legal status of the unions under all circumstances only served the interests of the enemy and not those of the working class. This is also proven by the fact that after the liberation it was the organizations having been established illegally during the end of the war which became the driving forces, now legally, behind the effort to get life back to normal throughout the nation. Most of the new leaders of the trade unions and of the plant committees came out of the ranks of these heroes. We can find them everywhere in the vanguard of the struggle for democracy and socialism, because the working class recognized them as the ones who really and truly represented and worked for the realization of their interests.

THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR WORKERS' POWER (1944–1948)

by
Miklós Habuda

THE EMERGENCE OF THE ORGANIZED MASS MOVEMENT

Soviet armed forces first stepped on Hungarian soil in September 1944 and after six months of hard combat liberated our country from the yoke of Nazi occupation and fascist rule. A profound economic and social transformation began after the liberation with the vigorous emergence of the anti-fascist and democratic forces which until then had been forced underground. Already in the autumn of 1944 in the areas that were first liberated, legal organizations of the labour parties were established and various popular organs expressing the spontaneity and political activities of the working masses were started, namely, national committees exercising local authority; factory committees of workers supervising capitalist productions; self-governing organizations in villages and towns carrying out administrative functions.

In close cooperation with the labour parties (the Social Democratic and the Communist Parties) and the popular organs, the trade-union movement sprang to life as well. The agricultural workers and poor peasants and the townships' proletariat in the liberated areas began organizing immediately. Among the first to establish organizations were those who had been prevented by the counter-revolutionary and fascist system from joining together in militant unions, such as the civil servants, railwaymen, postmen, engineers and technicians, teachers, doctors, etc. In other words, the artificial divisions of the old system broke down and in their stead, through the inclusion of new social strata, the realistic possibility presented itself for the trade unions to effectively contribute to the development of a militant alliance of industrial workers, agricultural workers, poor peasants and progressive intellectuals.

At the initiative of the communists, the organizations of the industrial workers, agricultural workers and poor peasants began to clear the ruins and started production even before the capital was liberated in February 1945. Shock-brigades were formed one after the other which, before all else, set to repairing the factories, railways, postal services, roads and harvesting crops left in the fields. They began to militate for the improvement of the economic and social condition of the workers, for assurances concerning basic freedoms and for a say in the direction of the nation's economic and political life. They demanded the immediate execution of land reform, the enforcing of measures against loafers and the immediate dismissal of fascist elements from offices and factories.

The newly established organizations of the intellectuals also enthusiastically joined in the work of the nation's economic, social and political transformation. They fought for their own as well as general labour interosts; the civil servants for a democratic administration, the teachers for the democratization of the schools, the engineers and technicians for the ensurance of continuous production and so on.

Half of the country was still under German occupation when on November 30, 1944 the Hungarian Communist Party published the program of the democratic national reconstruction, which also expressed the initiative of the masses. "There will come a Hungarian renaissance", announced the Communist Party, "if every decent Hungarian joins with the Hungarian National Independence Front in building a new and democratic Hungary, if the people take over the running of the country..."[1]

The program designated as basic national tasks: the need to turn against fascist Germany and to support the Red Army of the Soviet Union, the calling of war criminals to account, the disbanding of fascist organizations and the prevention of their rebirth and the cleansing of the administrative organs, the judiciary, the national defence and police forces of anti-people elements. In the interest of the hundreds of thousands of destitute and small-plot holding peasants, it took a position favouring land reform. There were various points concerning the supervision of the cartels and large banks in order to limit their profits, the nationalization of mines, oil-wells, electric power plants and insurance companies and the support for private enterprise serving the people's interest.

The program of the communists formulated in detail the workers' economic and socio-political long standing demands and the most essential aspects of the trade unions' policies of protecting the workers' economic interests. It called for the eight-hour workday; annual paid holidays; protection of women, child and apprentice workers; legal application of collective agreements; expansion of workmen's compensation and its return to workers' control, elimination and prevention of unemployment and termination of restrictions on free choice as to place of work. It was in the interest of the workers that it supported the need to ensure the right to strike. Furthermore, the program stood for the creation of a new, democratic state power.

The Hungarian Communist Party presented its program of national cooperation and national rebirth to the Hungarian people and called on the parties and unions, the party members and those outside of any parties to support it. The creation of a new, democratic power, the execution of land reform and the restricting of capitalist monopolies were such aims of the nation's transformation, which immediately met with the approval of the majority of the people.

It was as an expression of the people's will that on December 2, 1944 the

[1] *A Magyar Kommunista Párt és a Szociáldemokrata Párt határozatai 1944–1948* (Resolutions of the Hungarian Communist Party and of the Social Democratic Party 1944–1948), Budapest, 1967, pp. 37–38.

political alliance of the democratic parties was organized in liberated Szeged, under the name of the Hungarian National Independence Front. The trade unions enthusiastically joined the National Independence Front which had brought together the Hungarian Communist Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Independent Small-Holders' Party, the National Peasant Party. The unions and parties grouped in this common front had accepted, with slight modifications, the November 30, 1944 program of the Communist Party which thus became the "official" program of the anti-fascist, democratic, national alliance. It formed the basis for the convening of the Provisional National Assembly on December 21st, which established the country's provisional government. The policy of national alliance resting on a broad social base was reflected in the composition of the National Assembly and the government, but the enlarged role and decisive weight of the leftist forces, especially the labour parties, were also expressed.[2]

It cannot be doubted for even a moment that in the given situation, when a new power, that of the people, was on the rise, most of the work was on the shoulders of the working class and within these promising historical circumstances it had to be in the vanguard of the struggle for a transformed society. It was clear to the leaders of the two labour parties that the working class could only fulfil its historical role if its ranks were not divided and if it did not waste its energies. The conditions for this could only be guaranteed by the cooperation of the two labour parties and through their being united in action.

Already at the beginning of the democratic transformation, one of the essential aspects of the Hungarian Communist Party's politics was the idea of working-class unity and it was in this spirit that the left wing of the Social Democratic Party began its activities as well. The Hungarian Communist Party and the left-wing social democrats regarded their cooperation as a contribution towards the gradual realization of the total political and organizational unity of the working class; this aim was also laid down in their agreement concluded when both were still underground, on October 10, 1944.[3] The leading organs of the two parties emphasized the necessity of gradually carrying through this agreement when in January 1945 they laid down the basic principles of their future cooperation.

Undoubtedly the views of the Communist and Social Democratic Parties were different on several important theoretical and practical questions. However, the leaders of the two parties correctly emphasized points of agreement rather than those of disagreement. There was a basic agreement on the cardinal issues of

[2] Out of the 230 delegates at the National Assembly, 71 were from the Hungarian Communist Party, 55 from the Independent Small-Holders' Party, 38 from the Social Democratic Party, 16 from the National Peasant Party, 12 from the Bourgeois Democratic Party, 19 from the trade unions and also 19 delegates who were outside of any parties. Most of those outside of any parties were representatives of the anti-german elements of the old ruling class. The Communist Party got 3 portfolios in the government, the social democrats 2, the independent small-holders 2 and the National Peasant Party 1. The conservative group of those outside of any parties received three portfolios in addition to Béla Dálnoki Miklós who was appointed Prime Minister.

[3] This is dealt with in detail in Kálmán Szakács's study in the present volume.

creating a democratic, independent Hungary, the total liquidation of Hungarian reactionary forces and the struggle against fascism. Nor were there any differences in opinion on the need for a strong and united labour movement and labour organizations to ensure the success of Hungarian democracy.

It became evident from the experience of the political struggle going on in the liberated zones that it was the trade-union movement expressing the workers' interests which could best give the necessary organizational framework for united action and the eventual unity of the working class. This line of reasoning on the part of the two labour parties was particularly relevant in the given circumstances when the strengthening of the national united front and the involvement of hundreds of thousands in the struggle for a democratic transformation were the immediate tasks. Those obstacles, which, during the period of illegality, hindered the creation of a united trade-union movement despite the agreement concluded between the two parties, were eliminated.

On the basis of the January 1945 agreement, the labour parties decided on the immediate political and organizational unity of the trade-union movement; this was considered to be a first step towards unity of action by the working class and the organizational unity of the labour movement. They pointed out that a national united front was not possible without a united working class and that a united trade-union movement was a prerequisite for a united labour front. The leaders of both parties specially called their memberships' attention to the importance of the common tasks which needed to be carried out in the trade unions. They pointed out that in the past the trade unions had been significant factors in the Hungarian labour movement and that after the liberation, at the threshold of reconstruction, their role was only going to increase. It was for this reason that it was one of the more important obligations of every communist and social democrat to strengthen the trade unions and to ensure their militant cooperation within the trade unions.

The realism and political practicality of the views regarding the unity of the trade unions were also supported by events taking place outside of the nation's borders. Movements for the uniting of the trade unions also developed in the countries which chose the path of people's democracy, namely, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia. Furthermore, in its struggle for the international anti-fascist unity of the working class, the international trade-union movement achieved its greatest political results in 1945. At the February 1945 London Conference, the representatives of 40 nations and of 60 million organized workers passed a resolution concerning the need to create a democratic international alliance of the working class and this was the first step toward the establishment of the World Federation of Trade Unions.

It was on the basis of the previously discussed principled stand of the two labour parties that unified trade unions were established which had within their ranks communists, social democrats and workers either outside of any parties or in some other party. The trade-union movement was organized afresh on February 7, 1945 and the composition of the personnel of the Trade Union

Council and its initial activities in the reconstruction totally reflected the spirit of cooperation and unity. In other words, the Hungarian trade-union movement had at last become an effective weapon of the working class in the struggle for the interest of all working people.

The announcement of the program of the National Independence Front and the development of the struggle for its realization together with the decision to totally unify the trade unions and the execution of that decision gave a new impetus to the development of the trade-union movement. In the past the trade unions had primarily embraced industrial workers and were mainly based in the capital and a few industrial centres, but now, in a short time, they became mass organizations spreading to all parts of the nation involving hundreds of thousands of blue and white collar workers. This movement, already imposing in size, had 400,000 members in May 1945, only a few weeks after the liberation of the country on April 4, 1945, and by the end of the year the figure had grown to nearly a million in its fifty trade organizations.[4]

However, it must be kept in mind that the numerical growth itself did not indicate in all its aspects a corresponding growth of political strength. The trade unions had opened their doors wide to all who wanted to join. They adopted the correct principle that the "the trade union was not a party", but rather, a mass-organization and one of its primary tasks was to raise broad masses of people, once they were involved in the organization, to a position of class consciousness by educating them about the class struggle. It was in this spirit that the leaders of the trade-union movement formulated the basic principles regarding union membership, early in 1945: "... Every democratic minded Hungarian worker may be a member of a trade union regardless of political affiliation, nationality or religion".[5]

The character and effectiveness of the activities of the trade unions, the members of which were mainly communists and social democrats but also included those with other, or without any, party affiliations, were determined by the fact that the communists exercised a decisive influence from the very beginning. Above all, this is explained by the fact that already before the country's liberation the leaders of the Hungarian Communist Party had considered the most important tasks of the Party's trade-union politics. They regarded the organizations of the working class as an important asset to the developing mass movement of the workers.

In the interest of winning the workers to regard the tasks of the democratic transformation as their own, after building up the party organizations the main emphasis was laid on strengthening the trade unions. A significant number of the Party's most experienced cadre was mobilized for this work. It was clear to the

[4] Between 1931 and 1943, trade-union membership fluctuated between 102,000 and 112,000 and in 1944 fell to 50,000.

[5] *A magyar szakszervezetek első szabad közgyűlése* (The first open public meeting of the Hungarian trade unions). Budapest, 1946, p. 24.

Hungarian Communist Party that it could only gain greater influence in the ranks of the workers if it conducted its agitational and organizing work mainly in the large plants and trade unions and would thus make up for everything it had been deprived of by the Horthy-regime. And above all, during the close of 1944 and the first half of 1945 the Communist Party worked out the comprehensive program of the democratic transformation and reconstruction of the country, and this program had also mobilized the unions' masses for the struggle.

Before 1945, the Social Democratic Party was unsuccessful in clarifying both the main questions of the democratic transformation and, consequently, the most vital tasks of the Party. In addition to this, after the liberation the social democrats were faced with an entirely new situation. Some of the Party's members and a significant number of middle cadres from among the union leadership joined the Communist Party. The social democrats had to turn away from the practice of several decades, which was party work based on districts, and begin instead to establish party branches in factories and other places of work. The trade unions, which before 1945 were almost totally interlinked with the Social Democratic Party, became independent and the Party could not find the right method of providing intermediate leadership for the masses and the social democrats active in the unions. The outcome of all this was that the Social Democratic Party could not give immediate answers to the many basic questions of trade-union politics. The social-democratic trade-union leaders and activists, due to the lack of consistent social-democratic politics expressing the interests of the popular democratic development in every regard, could not be equal partners with the communists in the struggle to win over the trade-union masses.

However, the left-wing social-democratic leaders of the trade-union movement actively cooperated, within the framework of the united movement, with the communists in union politics. The policy of cooperation did not exclude, however, conflicts on numerous occasions between the left social democrats and the communists, so that considerable energies were sometimes spent on unnecessary rivalries. The chief reason for the rivalry was that the Social Democratic Party did not want to acknowledge the termination of its previously enjoyed monopoly. It was already clear by the beginning of 1945, before the clearly rightist line had developed within the Party, that the chief conflicts between the left and right wings of the Party would be concerning the cooperation of the labour parties and the unity of the trade unions. Despite the rivalries, the left-wing social democrats were outstanding in the struggle for the preservation of the unions' unity and the two labour parties' cooperation.

THE NEW DEMANDS OF THE UNIONS' ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STRUGGLE

The capital was liberated during February 1945, but much of it lay in ruins. The magnitude of the loss – forty per cent of the national wealth had been destroyed – was beginning to emerge. The labour parties' organization and the trade unions

did not idly wait for instructions from the Provisional Government which was far from the capital, but rather, immediately began to clear the ruins and start up production and transport. The Trade Union Council, in close cooperation with the two labour parties, assigned among priority tasks the strengthening and extension of nation-wide plant committees that had already been established on the workers' spontaneous initiative. The tasks of the various organs, which were a considerable achievement of the workers, born out of the needs of reconstruction and the democratic transformation, were determined by the work of ensuring the prerequisites for production, the supervision of production by the workers themselves and the creation of plant democracy. Although the plant committees were formed in order to supervise capitalist production and distribution and were not the plant organs of the trade unions, nevertheless, the directing of the activities was taken in hand by the Trade Union Council and the head offices of the respective unions. The initial experiences had already shown that they played a significant role in executing concrete trade-union assignments and gained recognition for their economic and political roles within the plants. However, the indispensable precondition for the effectiveness of their many-sided activities was political backing and legal recognition of their economic and power positions won by concrete deeds. This end was served by a February 1945 government decree issued at the urging of the two labour parties and the unions. The decree granted the workers' organizations in the plants the right to supervise the plants' production and commercial transactions, to have a say in the correction of work conditions and in the plant's administration. All this strengthened the position of the working class, increased its influence on government and put the brakes on capitalist exploitation.

The National Federation of Industrialists considered the elimination of contradictions within the plants to be one of the most important tasks and tried to get representatives of the capitalists into the plant committees. However, the Trade Union Council, by way of answering the efforts of the industrialists, had stated in the rules of operations, prepared for the plant committees, that the workers' organizations were for the employees only and management could not be included. And a later, June 1945 decree further consolidated the position of the plant committees by giving them and the unions considerably greater spheres of authority.

The plant committees, active throughout the nation, gave effective assistance to the trade unions in solving problems relating to *supplies* and *wages*.

The anonymous heroes of the restoration of order and the reconstruction of the country, carrying out essential tasks when they were close to starving, namely the workers, practically performed miracles. They undertook what seemed to be impossible. It often happened that the 15 dekagrams (5.29 oz) of bread, that was due every worker, could not be obtained for days; and for weeks, sometimes months, they went without pay. However, in the long run the success of reconstruction depended first of all on the workers' labour capacity.

Already in January 1945, the Communist Party had called upon the liberated

towns, the democratic parties, the national committees and the trade unions to raise the necessary food provisions for industrial workers, and for the capital, while five government ministers had travelled the country for the same reason. The workers' organizations – with the plant committees, the union of the food industry workers and the Trade Union Council in the fore – began to create the necessary prerequisites for the consistent distribution of vital goods. But it was not sufficient merely to mobilize forces to obtain the necessary supplies. The complete solution could only be gained through struggle, a class struggle, economically and politically, against the black market, profiteering and capitalist speculation. The unions organized numerous successful actions to break down these activities and to force the capitalist owners of the plants to make concessions.

Due to the purposeful and coordinated activities of the two labour parties and the trade unions, the supply of provisions had improved greatly during the first months. But the grave economic situation the country was in after the war, the low level of production, the lack of food and manufactured consumers goods and bad transport were all objective obstacles needing a longer period of time to be dealt with properly. Even in regard to the supply of provisions, satisfactory results were only achieved gradually, through almost superhuman efforts and only after things had got stabilized. The establishment of a *wage system* appropriate to the given circumstances was a decisive prerequisite for providing for the hundreds of thousands earning wages and salaries, for carrying through the tasks of reconstruction and for increasing production. This was all the more so necessary as wages had remained at the low 1944 levels after liberation and at innumerable places the workers had only got slight advance payment or had even worked without any kind of wages or benefits. As the 1945 members' meeting of the National Federation of Industrialists had stated, the retreating Germans and the fleeing presidents of banks and corporations "had taken all cash funds with them" and months had passed before the government could give credit to the businesses to pay their employees.

It was in the midst of growing inflation that the trade unions and the plant committees sought possible solutions. In forming the policy on wages, special attention was paid to the directives of the communists who had an increasing role in economic policy as well as those of the social democrats who were supporting the communists. The interests of the workers and the nation's objective economic situation were two fundamental factors that always had to be considered. Out of an analysis of these, a position was born voicing the practicality of the short-term collective agreement with a fixed system of wages, which was realistic in the given situation even though prices were not fixed and money as a commodity of exchange and payment had only a limited role. However, the entire essence of the wages policy was determined by the fundamental recognition that a successful and final solution of this for the working class could only be brought about by the solidification of the nation's economic situation and the termination of inflation. There were two possibilities to choose from: either to keep the daily interests of

the workers in mind and try to keep up with the rapidly growing prices, or look ahead to the future and with self-restraint, by restricting demands and adjusting wages to production and not to prices through a moderate wage system, slow down the rate of inflation and stop it. Undoubtedly the only correct choice, which expressed the objective interests of the working class, was the second one, particularly because this could serve the most effectively to strengthen the power of the workers.

It was in this spirit that the Trade Union Council decided that during the period of inflation the unions would follow a policy of moderate wage increases. In addition to this, the Trade Union Council stated that the system of collective agreements had to be extended to all blue and white collar workers, which would place wage and work relations on a new basis, incorporating every just demand of the employees.

First to come into existence was the ironworkers' collective agreement which was the first of its kind in the history of the unions and Hungarian industries: it embraced the given branch of industry in its entirety, contained regulations valid for all employers and uniformly dealt with the questions of work conditions. In turn, the contracts of the other trades were signed as well, although in many cases this could only be won with the aid of the Ministry of Industrial Affairs which was in the hands of the social democrats, through hard battles with the employers, the capitalists and the National Federation of Industrialists. This was understandable considering that new labour legislation and welfare measures were being put into effect, for example, the equality of women workers, that is, the principle of "equal pay for equal work". The true significance of the situation can only be measured if we consider that the conclusion of the collective contracts affected just about every worker and the entire capitalist class. During the quarter of a century of the counter-revolutionary period, very few trades had the possibility of collective contracts, whereas after the liberation, inside of three months, collective agreements were made in 323 trades belonging to 178 branches of industry, all of which effectively represented the interests of the workers as well as those of the nation's economic reconstruction.

With the establishment of the people's power, that is, with the participation of the working class in the organs of power, the economic struggle of the organized workers became more complex than before. The new situation, the perspective of a developing society, necessitated a reconsideration of the old understanding of the unions' self-interested economic and welfare policies. Given the country's deteriorated economic position, the productiveness of the capitalists depended largely on credit from the state budget. In view of this, the old conception which held that the unions' task was to struggle against the capitalists for better wages could only be accepted in part. Problems like improving the workers' standard of living, reducing profits and lessening exploitation could only be dealt with in a framework which involved consideration of the capacities of the state budget and allowed capital to function as an aid to reconstruction.

In other words, on the one hand, it was necessary to conduct an economic

struggle against the capitalists and, on the other hand, the realistic limits of the struggle had to be drawn, the resistance of the workers had to be properly channelled, which proved to be an extraordinarily difficult task because a significant portion of the working class failed to grasp the essence of the changed situation. Furthermore it was necessary to struggle within the trade unions, in the interest of the whole of the working class, against the pressure of narrow, individual trade interests, against efforts to extort unreasonably high wages and against exaggerated slogans and demagoguery.

As a consequence of unfavourable economic developments, the moderate, deflationary wages policy soon gave rise to serious contradictions. A few weeks after having been set, the minimal wages could not even cover the most basic necessities in the wake of speculative price increases. It is precisely because of this that the labour parties and the Trade Union Council constantly sought the least trying solutions within the framework of the decided upon wages policy, but with regrettably little success. The Trade Union Council decided early in May that they would only follow the policy of moderate demands if the conditions for the elimination of the black market were created and if the government guaranteed the workers the basic vital foodstuffs at the official prices. However, considering the situation of public supplies, there was not much cause for optimism.

The working class had to bear the brunt of the work of setting the country back on its feet economically. The credit belongs to the best of the communist, social-democrat and the organized workers without party affiliations and to the thousands and tens of thousands who, although often at odds, overcame seemingly impossible obstacles. The masses of workers were firm in their determination to reconstruct the nation, to carry through the popular, democratic transformation and to realize the politics of democratic cooperation.

The trade-union movement played a significant role not only in protecting the economic interests of hundreds of thousands but also in building up the workers' position of power. It was active in the creation of the National Independence Front and in the execution of its program. In December 1944 it had sent nineteen representatives to the Provisional National Assembly and once the capital and the Western sectors of the country were liberated another forty-two representatives were delegated to this highest authority of the state, specificallly representing the union. The delegates of the trade-union movement were taken into the popular organs and local bodies of authority while, on the plant level, the unions took care of the direction of workers' power organs which were recognized by the Provisional Government. It was not by accident that, while trying to liquidate the popular organs in general, the representatives of the old ruling classes who were in the new democratic government concentrated their fire on the trade unions during the first half of 1945. They had carried out numerous attempts to force the trade unions out of the local positions of power. It was only in the course of bitter struggles that, in cooperation with the labour parties, these attempts had failed.

By force of circumstance, due to the particular situation which had developed following the liberation, the trade unions had risen to the foreground of political

life. With their swift recovery and willingness and readiness to act decisively, they had preceded some of the democratic parties, even the Social Democratic Party in some respects. The trade-union movement which was regenerating quickly and which had a great mass power at its disposal had to be reckoned with as a significant, independent political force. The trade unions quickly grasped that under the given circumstances in order to protect the interests of the workers they should not be up against the entire state structure; that is such a new type of power was developing which considered it to be its fundamental responsibility to serve the interests of all working people and back it with the force of law. It was for this reason that they took active part in all those activities and struggles of the labour parties which were directed towards the extension and stabilization of the new organs of the state and its authority. And it was a logical extension of this struggle that, benefiting from the support of the labour parties, they sought and did obtain representation in the national and local organs of government. It was in this way that the struggle of the economic interests merged with the political struggles.

The practice that evolved was in complete agreement with the labour policy which, from a perspective of workers' power, sought to ensure the greatest possible influence of the popular forces in every state organ. At the times when the labour parties did not yet embrace great masses of people, the hundreds of thousands who were outside of any parties could have direct representation in the organs of the state through the unions. These factors greatly contributed to the actual democratization of the state, to the development of mass movements which thrust forward the revolutionary transformation and to the successful execution of the tasks of reconstruction.

The question of the *economic reconstruction of the nation* could only get on the agenda after the fascist forces had been liquidated and the entire country liberated. Once that was achieved, effective solutions to the economic tasks became the key to political and social progress.

The May 1945 National Conference of the Hungarian Communist Party, which set forth the concrete tasks of the reconstruction, also supported by the Social Democratic Party, clearly stated that one of the chief prerequisites for the realization of the goals set was the mobilization of the working masses. It was for this reason that an in-depth analysis and the detailed delineation of the responsibilities of the communists active in the trade unions were considered so important. The directives of the Conference outlined the role and the tasks of the entire union movement in the period of the popular democratic transformation.

The basic fact had to be taken into account that in Hungary a particular form of social transformation had occurred, that such a popular democratic revolution in the form of the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants had developed which had many of the traits of a socialist revolution. The direction that the development of society took was decided on by the masses who were won by the labour parties. The representatives of the workers and the peasants took part in the central and local organs of the state power right from the beginning and the leading role in the social transformation belonged to the working class.

The Conference had correctly pointed out that with the new political make up of the country, the working class was in a qualitatively different situation. The character of its organizations which fought for its interests had changed fundamentally as the trade unions had become one of the directing organs of the nation's economic life. These organizations of the workers had grown into nation-building forces and were partners in the great responsibilities undertaken for the nation's economy, for the fate and future of the nation and Hungarian democracy. The Conference emphasized that the Hungarian working class could fulfil its role in the nation's reconstruction only with the support of a strong and virile trade-union movement because "it is the importance and influence of the trade unions that in many respects decide the role the Hungarian industrial workers get in the nation's life in the future". That is why the Party considered trade-union work "to be of decisive importance in Party work".[6]

The Conference had adopted a position on the questions of the unions' *political activities* because this had given rise to disagreements between the communists and the social democrats. In the course of sometimes rather passionate polemics, the communists generally took Marxist-Leninist position applicable to Hungarian conditions, clearly stating the unity between the unions' economic and political struggles. But certain communist, and even more so, social-democratic trade-union leaders and party functionaries often interpreted the political struggle as representing party political interests or as the struggle for position that was going on between the two parties within the unions.

This oversimplified, vulgar approach to political struggle, which affected the every-day practice of the unions, made the principled clarification of the questions very difficult. The National Conference of the communists for this very reason stated that they were not in agreement with needless rivalries and the narrow interpretation of party politics within the unions, and that this was not in contradiction with the fact that the labour parties might carry out party work among the unionized masses to make their programs known and to win their support. As far as the political struggle against those opposing the popular democratic transformation was concerned, this the Conference considered to be an organic aspect of union activity.

The fact is that the question as to whether or not the trade unions should engage in politics, a question mainly raised by right-wing social democrats, was already irrelevant, as it had been surpassed by concrete practice already in the first half of 1945. But this was not only Hungary's case. We can mention the February 1945 World Trade Union Conference held in London where the delegates uniformly favoured the unions being active participants in the new

[6] *A Magyar Kommunista Párt és a Szociáldemokrata Párt határozatai 1944–1948* (The decisions of the Hungarian Communist and Social-Democratic Parties 1944–1948). Budapest, 1967, pp. 87–90. Also see: *Harc az újjáépítésért. A Magyar Kommunista Párt 1945. május 20–21-én tartott országos értekezletének jegyzőkönyve. Kádár János referátuma* (Struggle for Reconstruction. The minutes of the National Conference of the Hungarian Communist Party, May 20–21, 1945. János Kádár's report), p. 144.

political arrangements that were being conducted after the war. In spite of this, partly as a heritage from the past, certain trade-unionist tendencies had survived in Hungary, which, with the slogan of "protecting" the unity of the unions, sought to limit their activities to the sphere of economic interests and tried to steer the workers' organizations into some sort of "neutralist" political role.

The first few months after the liberation had already clearly shown that in our particular circumstances the universally valid Marxist statement emphasizing the unity of the economic and political struggles was doubly valid, namely, that in the course of the workers' struggle, their economic and political movements are forged into an inseparable unit.[7] When the new power relationships were developing, there were close links between the economic tasks, even taken in a narrow sense, and political activity, because the future political strength of the working class depended upon the successful execution of the economic tasks of the reconstruction. And we feel we would not be contradicting the Leninist thesis emphasizing the primacy of politics if we state that in 1945 and 1946 the solution of the economic problems was a prerequisite to the solution of the most important political questions. At that time the economic tasks were always closely tied to the problems of power relationships. It is the merit of the communists and the left-wing social democrats, who cooperated with them, that they recognized this connection and considered it to be a primary factor in their politics. They are further proven to have been right by the fact that the representatives of capitalist interests, after their initial passivity, began to attack with increasing intensity on the economic front as a result of which the political struggle was not only present in the social sphere but in economic life as well.

It is not by accident, and subsequent events explain this, that the attitude of the social democrats towards the question of the unions' political struggles gradually turned in the right direction after mid-1945.

The May Conference of the Hungarian Communist Party praised highly the union movement's role in the reconstruction and its activity in getting the nation's economy going in the first few months. The Trade Union Council, with the direction of the labour parties and in cooperation with the plant committees, carried out particularly important responsibilities in getting the industrial plants of Budapest and its suburbs back on an operational basis, keeping them that way and ensuring sound management for plants left abandoned by their owners. The unions of the construction workers, the public transport employees, engineers and technicians, postal workers and railroadmen effectively mobilized their members to restore normal life to the capital, namely, to start postal services and public transport and to solve all the numerous other tasks of economic life. To quote the May Conference: "In the first months the trade unions and the plant committees, the new and great achievements of the working class, created life in

[7] Cf. *Marx-Engels a szakszervezetekről* (Marx and Engels on the Trade Unions). Budapest, 1961, p. 210.

this country by attacking the tasks at hand and mobilizing all available resources, began industrial production and created the prerequisites to regular work".[8]

However, the May Conference demanded even more both quantitatively and qualitatively than before: the purposeful and organized integration of the entire movement into the reconstruction. The obstacles which lay in the path of this, which had to be overcome during the second half of 1945, were not to be depreciated.

Although a communist program for reconstruction was drawn up and gained the support of democratic public opinion, the various economic portfolios not under communist leadership failed to prepare their part of the plans for reconstruction on time, despite the constant criticism of the communists and the urging demands of the Trade Union Council. The Council had repeatedly reported that the work of the unions in the reconstruction efforts and the mobilization of the masses had been made considerably more difficult by the fact that they did not know in any detail the government's plans and the need of the respective ministries.

At the strong initiative of the Trade Union Council a meeting was finally arranged in mid-1945 between the concerned ministries and the unions in order to arrange the coordination of the mobilization of the labour force. They agreed upon a list of priorities in providing for the labour force and on the practical steps to be followed in the mobilization. They adopted a position in favour of initiating a general obligation-to-work policy. Already at the interdepartmental meeting, the opinion was strongly emphasized that the key to the final solution of the labour-force problem was to give legal recognition of the exclusive right of the unions to handle job referrals. This was the only possible way of keeping track of the labour force, of organizing the labour market and keeping overall interests in mind, and successfully cooperating with the various branches of production, rather than having the workers acting at random.

Granting the unions a monopoly on labour exchange had not only economic but political significance as well. It was an effective tool against the capitalists' manipulation of wages, a weapon in the hands of the rural proletariat in the struggle against the rich peasants who took on hired hands, and it served to protect the white collar workers' interests by blocking, or at least restricting, the dispossessed landowners, the tenants, bailiffs and other reactionary elements who returned to the country, from getting into important economic, government and administrative positions. It becomes easy to understand why the legal codification of this right to belong exclusively to the unions was only possible once the resistance of the National Federation of Industrialists, which protected capitalist interests, and the right wing of the Small-Holders' Party, which served the interests of the wealthy peasants, had been broken.

[8] *Harc az újjáépítésért* (Struggle for reconstruction). Az MKP 1945 május 20–21-én tartott országos értekezletének jegyzőkönyve (The minutes of the National Conference of the Hungarian Communist Party, May 20–21, 1945).

The broad-scale development of the reconstruction necessitated, in addition to getting transportation under way, the manufacture of agricultural machinery, the supply of manufactured goods to farmers, a large-scale construction program and the execution of many other, equally vital tasks and the participation of the entire working class in the socialist emulation campaigns undertaken by the workers. To this end, the Trade Union Council issued a public appeal on June 15 for a national campaign of socialist emulation for the reconstruction.

The campaign soon achieved considerable results in increasing production, conserving power and material, restoring labour discipline and in other fields. The campaign was an original suggestion of the Hungarian unions and they did not have any indigenous experiences to rely upon – a circumstance with hidden problems. However, it could not be otherwise when on the one hand there was national cooperation, that is, cooperation with the capitalists, and on the other hand, the ever sharpening objective contradiction between labour and capital to be seen not only among the not very class-conscious workers, but also on the whole labour front; and this could only be solved once and for all with the full implementation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Nevertheless, it can be ascertained that even in the midst of inflationary circumstances, when it had often seemed impossible for the workers to keep body and soul together, the above-listed major achievements all attested to the workers' heroism. And the trade-union movement itself had a significant role in the rapid realization of the reconstruction program of the May Congress.

THE SHARPENING OF CLASS CONTRADICTIONS

Hungarian society became increasingly polarized with the defeat of German fascism, the disintegration of the international anti-fascist coalition, the beginning of peaceful construction and with the social questions becoming the foremost topic. The capitalists predicated their role in the reconstruction on whether or not capitalist exploitation would be able to continue as before, that is, whether or not the situation would be stabilized in their favour. The members of the old ruling classes in the government expended their energies on broadening, or rather, trying to expand their influence. Their efforts were helped by the fact that they had found supporters in the Independent Small-Holders' Party. In fact, the right wing of the party had become a sort of focal point of reaction which could thus carry out its anti-democratic activities while hiding behind one of the "democratic" parties of the National Independence Front.

The reactionary right wing clearly understood that its influence among the petite bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia was not strong enough to affect the transformation of society according to reactionary interests. They also understood that these elements were not sufficient by themselves to form the necessary social basis and without the support of the working peasants and especially of a significant portion of the workers the development of society could

not be steered from the course it was taking. However, they did consider a "quiet transformation" to be possible and set for themselves the goal of strengthening their already established positions and to gradually build a base among the workers as well through which they could make a stand against the labour parties, especially the Hungarian Communist Party.

The first signs of these efforts of the right wing appeared in the organizations of the agrarian workers and the poor peasants. The National Federation of Agrarian Workers and Small-Holders (FEKOSZ), with a membership of over one hundred thousand, had become a militant organization and the revolutionary force of the villages by the second half of 1945. The Small-Holders' Party wanted to expand the Hungarian Federation of Peasants[9] to make it the sole mass organization representing the peasants' interests and thus isolate the National Federation of Agrarian Workers and Small-Holders.

In the second half of 1945, the reactionary right wing of the Small-Holders' Party initiated a campaign against the unions of the railroadmen, the employees of private firms, the public employees and teachers in the name of "the right to organize" and charged the labour parties with usurpation of the movement. They demanded parity in the leadership and freedom from politics in the unions, adding the threat that after the coming national elections the "one-sided" organizations would be disbanded. Of course, they did not consider to be "one sided" their own plans to make the Small-Holders' Party the exclusive ruler of the newly established unions after the elections. They wanted to gain a foothold in the industrial plants using, or rather, exploiting democracy; that had been a long-standing dream of the Small-Holders' right wing. They demanded parity in the plant committees as well, distributed flyers and promised effective representation of interests to workers joining them.

Such right-wing activities merely signalled the general and open attacks which unfolded after the November 1945 elections. The Small-Holders' Party received 57 per cent of the votes, compared to the 17 per cent each which the two labour parties received. Its right wing sought for the party to have proportionate representation in the unions, the plant committees and the Trade Union Council.

The labour parties' position in the government was not weakened following the election. Several key economic and political portfolios, such as Communications, Industries, Commerce, Interior, Justice and the two Deputy Prime Ministerial posts were in their hands and the Supreme Economic Council was under communist direction as well. However, out of eighteen portfolios, the Small-Holders' Party took nine – as against the solidly leftist, indeed, labour party

[9] The Hungarian Federation of Peasants was established in 1941 by pro-government and Small-Holders' Party politicians and in 1945 it was reorganized under the direction of the Independent Small-Holders' Party. The leading role was played by rich peasants but, nevertheless, it claimed to represent the interests of all peasants. In fact, it was an organization of the reactionary block grouped behind the Small-Holders' Party. Its aim was to line up the middle and poor peasants besides the bourgeoisie and use them against the working class. Their regularly voiced demand that the Peasants' Federation be granted the same rights as a trade union served these same ends.

majority of the former Parliament. The 245 Small-Holders' mandates were, after all, the expression of their absolute majority of the 57 per cent. This concentrated strength of the right wing in the National Assembly could not be depreciated in any way even if the left wing of the Small-Holders was taken into account. The lessons of the election clearly showed up the possibility that the Small-Holders' majority might be used by the reaction to gradually phase the working class out of power. Knowing this, the leaders of the Communist Party and the left-wing leaders of the Social Democratic Party and the unions did not merely interpret the attacks on the unions as part of the overall political struggle. They knew that these campaigns were an organic part of a comprehensive strategy aiming to weaken the growing power of the working class. It was for this reason that they took decisive action against them.

In their counter-attack, the Communist Party primarily relied on the unions, calling to battle these organizations which, at that time, represented 75 per cent of the workers of the large industries. The conflict was made somewhat complicated by the fact that the unprecedented inflation disorientated sections of the workers. Prices in June 1945 were one hundred and twenty times higher than in August 1939 and during the first week of July they rose another 30 per cent. Between July 15th and November 7th, the prices of important foodstuffs increased fifty-eight times. Although wages were increased, even 50–150 per cent increases failed to keep up with the rapid price growths. At the end of 1945, wages were two thousand times higher but prices were seventy-five thousand times what they were at the close of 1944.

As a consequence of the hardships, some of the less conscious workers began to turn against the unions because of the latters' policy of moderate wage demands and interpreted that as failure to sufficiently represent the workers' interest. The industrial workers and the miners went on strike at several locations. In October 1945, the Hungarian Communist Party urged the adoption of a moving scale of wages fixed to the movement of prices. The Trade Union Council declared itself to be in favour of this move, noting that although it would speed up inflation, it would fix the wage question for the workers. Such an ordering of the situation was a prerequisite for the unions to take a clear lead among the workers and to be able to organize the gradually broadening struggle against reaction and the big capitalists.

Following the 1945 national elections, the Communist Party had recognized that fundamental decisions must be made to strengthen the general economic and political position of the nation because that was the only way of easing the workers' daily lives. Therefore it approved the urgent convening of the planned trade-union congress which could speak in the name of nearly one million organized workers.

The Congress, convened on December 2, 1945, gave an account of the movement's significant organizational successes; there was hardly a place in the country where a union branch did not at least organize some of the workers. By the end of the year, a relatively stable middle leadership had developed out of the

ranks of the communists and the left-wing social democrats. The most essential areas of work were encompassed by the unions.

The delegates, representing fifty unions, adopted positions on all questions regarding the nation's life. They went beyond the program of the Independence Front and with the support of the Communist Party adopted demands concerning the immediate nationalization of electric power plants and mines in order to overcome the lack of coal and power; state supervision of banks and the nationalization of agricultural machine factories and all plants employing more than one thousand workers in order to stimulate industrial production, to prevent unemployment, and curb the economic influence of big capital; the taking of the mills into municipal ownership in order to ensure bread for the peasants and those unprovided for; and a cleansing of the civil service in order to break the resistance of the reaction. They demanded the heavy taxing of speculative capital, the securing of even distribution to the public of principal manufactured consumer goods and the converting of coffee houses and luxurious restaurants to mass-cafeterias.

The Congress emphatically stated that the patience of the workers was running low and it was high time for words to be replaced by actions. It demanded the introduction of the moving scale of wages as long as the government failed to take the necessary steps against those really causing the suffering and to ensure, at a set price, the necessary consumer goods for the workers. It expressed the determination of organized labour to protect the most basic achievement of the people's democracy, the distribution of land during the first half of 1945. The Congress regarded "the stepping up and consistent execution of the struggle against renascent reaction" to be the central task of the movement. It urged the mobilization of the masses of organized labour and the focussing of its energy on cleansing the two main nests of reaction – the armed forces and the civil service – of anti-people elements.[10]

The Congress could also report with satisfaction on the movement's international activities. The Hungarian unions were the first, next to the communists, to break out of the nation's isolation which had been brought upon it by the politics of the old ruling classes. The Hungarian trade unions began to cooperate with the Soviet, Polish, Yugoslav, Romanian, Czechoslovak, Bulgarian, Albanian and Austrian trade unions. They took part in the establishment of the World Federation of Trade Unions in Paris during September–October 1945 where they made contact with the representatives of the unions of other nations. The representatives of the organized Hungarian working class took their place in the Central Council of the World Federation of Trade Unions.

One of the most fundamental tasks of the first post-liberation congress of the Hungarian union movement was the strengthening of the unity of the trade unions. The right wing of the Social Democratic Party began to attack the

[10] *A Magyar szakszervezetek első szabad közgyűlése. A kongresszus határozata* (The first open public meeting of the Hungarian trade unions. The decision of the Congress). Budapest, 1946, pp. 57–61.

communists, their positions and influence within the unions, because the relationship between the two labour parties had deteriorated in the course of the national elections. They demanded that the Congress should distribute leading union positions evenly, particularly in the Trade Union Council whereas before the communists had a majority. Certain leaders of their left wing had supported this demand. However, since they were not able to conclude such a favourable agreement, the Social Democratic Party's newspaper announced that the social-democratic union delegates, who were in a minority, would not participate in the Congress.

In other words, the right wing did not even shrink from threatening to disrupt the unity of the trade-union movement in their attempts to limit the influence of the communists. Fortunately, the point of view in favour of unity prevailed among the social-democratic union delegates and the majority decided to participate in the Congress. The communists continued to have a slight majority and kept their key leading positions in the main national organs of the union movement. The contributions of the two leaders of the labour parties, Mátyás Rákosi and Árpád Szakasits, showed that the conflict had been satisfactorily resolved through mutual concessions.

Among the resolutions of the Congress were items on the new collective wage system and on the introduction of the moving wage scale, but the leaders of the labour parties and of the union movement understood that a continuous rise of nominal wages was not going to be of much help given the workers' grave situation. There was an urgent need for immediate and effective help because there was a danger of the workers' energies getting completely tied down in a struggle for higher pay which could turn counter-productive in the politically increasingly intense class struggle. The best solution was considered to be one which would make the employers at least partly responsible for providing the basic necessities for the workers, perhaps through the distribution of their stock suitable for barter which would directly ensure food for the workers. At the beginning of 1946 the extraordinary circumstances gave rise to the rather unusual solution, the so-called calorie-wages system, a detour from traditional collective bargaining.

The new system guaranteed two kinds of wages: a gradually increasing basic cash wage and wages in goods ("calories"). The employers were obligated by the state to supply a part of the foodstuffs needed by the workers and their families. This solution eased the situation and helped the workers through the worst period of the inflation. It also contributed to the large-scale reduction of the strike mood that had spread during the end of 1945 and beginning of 1946 and allowed the successful development of a counter-offensive by the left.

The launching of the counter-offensive at the start of 1946 was made urgent by the behaviour of the reactionary forces (the Small-Holders' right wing among them), stirring up passions and even fascist provocations. They could not overtly oppose the first large-scale sanction against big capital, the nationalization of the coal mines on January 1, 1946, as that would have meant a break with the

program of the Independence Front and a turn against the will of the masses. But they were all the more open in their attack on the Supreme Economic Council, which was formed on the initiative of the communists. This government agency was under communist leadership and it maintained a close and effective supervision of the activities of the various economic ministries which were in the hands of the Small-Holders. They prevented actions which would bring about bankruptcy and with that also prevented efforts to prepare the ground for a turn to the political right.

The lawyers of the former landowners, with their contacts among fascist civil servants and right-wing elements, initiated court actions throughout the country trying to regain the distributed land. Those opposing the popular democratic transformation began to attack the democratic police in charge of law and order, aiming to diminish the influence of the communists in this important organ. The anti-people elements and reactionary civil servants had a strong role in all of these efforts. It was not merely incidental that, besides the communist-led national movement to defend the distributed land, the sharpest struggles between the forces of the left and right-wing reaction concerned a thorough house cleaning of the civil service. Supported by the social democrats, the Communist Party wanted to change three aspects in this field, to improve the budget by cutting expenditures through reduction of staff, force out reactionary elements, and begin the democratization of the state apparatus by the employment of staff with working-class and peasant backgrounds. However, the right wing of the Small-Holders' Party resisted the house cleaning at every opportunity. This was understandable since despite its majority in the National Assembly it did not have exclusive control over the state's legislating power and following the introduction of people's tribunals it had lost much of its influence over the actual practice of justice. Thus it clung to executive power as a sort of last resort and its still important posts there became a life and death question for the reaction. One particular reason for its continued struggle was to be able to affect the composition of the investigating bodies to include only those appointed by the government if the house cleaning did get under way. The labour parties were adamant on the question that the unions must be allowed to participate as well.

The Hungarian Communist Party outlined the demands of the leftist forces at a general meeting on February 16, 1945 in the capital and initiated a nation-wide offensive against the reactionary block. Workers' demonstrations, led by the labour parties and the unions, took place on a hitherto unprecedented scale. On March 5, 1946 a popular front type of coalition of the left forces within the Independence Front, the *Left-Wing Block*, was formed with the participation of the Communist Party, the Social Democratic Party, the National Peasant Party and the Trade Union Council. It demanded the cleansing of the civil service and the participation of the unions in that action; the realization of the complete program of nationalization as proposed by the National Independence Front, and the expulsion of the reactionary, anti-people elements from the coalition.

Influenced by the mass demonstrations, the Small-Holders' Party accepted the

Left-Wing Block's demands and expelled twenty right-wing Small-Holders' Party Members of Parliament from the Party. The cleansing of the civil service got under way as well with the Trade Union Council as one of its directors. Following a several-months long struggle by the labour parties and the unions, some 62,000 members of the civil service were removed out of a total staff of 300,000. With the removal of the majority of reactionary and anti-social elements as well as those spreading corruption and unfit managers, and by replacing them with working-class cadre, who took courses in public administration through their unions, it was possible to break through the reactionary and bureaucratic civil service. This made it possible to further democratize the total administration of the state.

The trade-union movement had a significant role in organizing and expanding the offensive against the reactionary forces, in the ongoing struggle to win the masses, in the new cooperation of the democratic forces and in the solidification of the popular forces within the coalition. Tactically, the unions' position was of key importance. The words of István Kossa, the general secretary of the Trade Union Council, were completely realistic in the light of the events of February and March as he spoke on March 7th before 400,000 people: "It must be understood by everybody that the Hungarian trade unions cannot be disregarded by the government because we have won the right to a decisive voice in the conduct of the nation's affairs through our fifty years of struggle for democracy".[11] The political prestige of the unions had noticeably increased in the eyes of the masses during those months.

However, beginning in the spring of 1946, union strength had to be concentrated on reversing an inflation that was without parallel and on *creating a stable currency*. The economists of the two labour parties predicated the stabilization plans on the maximum use of the nation's internal resources rather than on loans from abroad. In this, the unions saw a key role in the amassing of manufactured goods and in the formation of wage relations which would be the basis of the new industrial price system. These ends were served by the new work-competitions which were organized by the trade unions in order to increase production through the improvement of individual achievements, the seeking of new methods of work and through rationalization. The new collective general agreements, established at the Trade Union Council's behest, took into account the amount of goods produced in determining wages and at the same time placed great emphasis on increasing material incentives to increase production.

The introduction of stable currency on August 1, 1946 was a great victory for the labour parties and foremost for the Communist Party and with it for the organized working class and the working people fighting for reconstruction. However, many economic measures and political demands had yet to be put into practice in order to defend the stabilization and improve the living standard of the masses. This could only be realized at the cost of a bitter struggle with the reactionaries, the right wing of the Small-Holders' Party.

[11] *A Szakszervezeti Tanács jelentése a XVII. közgyűlésnek* (The Report of the Trade Union Council at the seventeenth public meeting). Budapest, 1948, p. 39.

The right wing of the Small-Holders' Party, which defended the interests of the bourgeoisie, and the extremist elements, who were either expelled or left that party and grouped into a separate party, blocked the further progress of the left in mid-1946 and brought about a crisis in the coalition. The coming peace agreements raised their hopes that Soviet troops would be withdrawn from Hungary together with the supervisory organs of the allies and then with the aid of the 57 per cent majority of the Small-Holders' Party in Parliament they would gradually shut the working class out of their positions of power, incite peasants and workers against each other and thus create the legal grounds for annihilating the popular democratic system.

In order to realize this goal, the Small-Holders' Party continued its efforts to further extend its social base. At the same time, it pushed for the immediate restructuring of the power relationships that had developed at the beginning of 1945. It demanded participation in the police, national defense and public administration in proportion with its 57 per cent of the votes gained in the elections. It agitated for the peasants having "unified representation of interests" with legal codification.

The law on "unified representation of interests" was the most suitable form of getting priority recognition of the interests of the rich peasantry. This law was generally directed against the National Federation of Agrarian Workers and Small-Holders and the trade-union movement. The right wing understood the unions' strength, influence and activities that thrust the social transformation forward. For this reason, in their strategy special emphasis was put on the weakening of the labour parties and the trade-union movement which supported the left wing of the coalition.

We can trace several of the efforts of the Small-Holders' Party in this regard. In August 1946 they began some sort of opposition unions, "trade organizations", on the basis of "occupation and profession" to try and win the so-called "working middle and upper class masses", the intelligentsia and the workers. They repeatedly attacked the unions, which supported the labour parties, in order to win to their own ranks those masses of workers who were hesitant and undecided. They had great hopes regarding the civil service's union which had then recently experienced considerable turmoil in the course of the cleansing.

The practical execution of the above was greatly influenced by the way the mentioned legislation on a "united representation of interests" of the peasantry was developing. The Hungarian Communist Party, the Social Democratic Party and the National Peasant Party uniformly rejected two cardinal points of the proposed legislation: one was regarding the establishment of a corporate type of peasant organization and the other concerned this organization having a labour exchange role as well. The function of a labour exchange was in close relation to the power of the working class. The earlier introduced controlled economy which was the basis of the stabilization was unimaginable without an organized labour

market. The organization of the labour market, however, demanded that there be a total supervision of the manpower situation. Such control would have been next to impossible without centralization, with the introduction of various "protection of interests" organizations. Only the trade unions had the right to carry out a labour exchange function, which ensured that the stipulations of collective agreements were given additional muscle. Any large-scale violation of those agreements could have jeopardized the stabilization.

The 3rd Congress of the Hungarian Communist Party held during the autumn of 1946 (September 28–October 1) decisively opposed the various efforts of the Small-Holders' right wing to disrupt the unity of the trade-union movement and establish oppositionist trade unions. It defeated the attempt to grant trade-union rights to the Hungarian Federation of Peasants to counterbalance the socialist trade-union movement. At the same time, the Communist Party mobilized its members who were working in the unions to urge the adoption of one of the main slogans of the Congress, which outlined the perspectives of socialism, to the effect that "it's not for Big Capital, but for the people that we build the nation" and, further, link up the popularization of the party's politics with the improvement of the workers' actual conditions. The November 1946 nationalization of the biggest factories of the heavy industry was just one of the many concrete realizations of the Party's slogan.

The discovery of a conspiratorial plot against the Republic had a significant role in the subsequent development of the political activities of the right wing of the Small-Holders' Party.[12]

The conspiracy, discovered at the end of 1946, compromised the Small-Holders' Party as some of its leaders and the head personnel of the Hungarian Federation of Peasants, which served the former's political interests, were found to have been in contact with the conspirators. The leadership of the Small-Holders' Party was forced to change the leadership of the Federation in response to the demands of the Left-Wing Block. The Federation could no longer play any noteworthy role in the counter-trade-union plans of the right and by early 1947 it was obvious that the right wing's efforts had come to naught.

Meanwhile the Social Democratic Party, aiming to reinforce its influence, demanded with repeated emphasis that the plant committee elections planned for early 1947 be held. The left wing of the social democrats had also hoped for

[12] The principal goals of the conspiracy, chiefly made up of former Horthyist elements, were the overthrow of democracy and of the Republic proclaimed in February 1946, the return of the monarchy, the return of the land, and the restoration of capitalism. A military chiefs-of-staff was established under the leadership of a former Chief-of-staff of the Horthyist armed forces. They planned the organization of former Horthyist officers either still in the armed forces or removed from them, expected direct aid from Western powers and made contact with leaders of the Hungarian fascist military and police forces, then in West-German camps. Exploiting all legal forms, they had combined illegal work with legal activities and were active in the Small-Holders' Party and the Hungarian Federation of Peasants.

a strengthening of their positions from this test of strength. However, the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Communist Party suggested a postponement of the elections. It knew that the elections would only further the competition between the two parties at such a time when the political situation demanded the closest cooperation among the forces of the working class. Despite the fact that the presidium of the Trade Union Council had agreed with the suggestion of the Communist Party, the leadership of the Social Democratic Party rejected the plans for postponing the elections.

The Communist Party stated at the outset of the elections that the primary aim must be to elect into the plant committees only such workers and intellectuals who could effectively represent the interests of their class and of their constituents and who had already gained the confidence of their fellow workers through their moral irreproachability. Despite this, the elections began in a politically very tense atmosphere with an increased competition between the two parties and only served to signal the political aimlessness, from the point of view of the two parties' cooperation, of continuing with the vote. Meanwhile the outlines of a bigger than ever communist vote were beginning to emerge from the early results where voting had already begun.

However, the Communist Party considered it more important to exploit the favourable political climate that followed the uncovering of the conspiracy than competing with the Social Democratic Party for victories which could only be gained at the expense of a transitional weakening of an emerging workers' unity. It was one of the historical roles of the trade-union movement that on numerous occasions, when the relationship between the two labour parties had deteriorated to a critical point, it successfully filled the function of a safety-valve. On the initiative of the communists active in the trade-union movement, the Trade Union Council took a united stand in favour of suspending and postponing the elections with which both labour parties agreed in the end. They could thus concentrate the unified strength of the working class on the struggle against the reactionary forces.

By early 1947 the economic and political struggle of the trade unions revolved around the planned economy and the adoption of the *Three Year Plan* into the Government Program. The Communist Party had published its proposed plan in December 1946 and its political effect was so great that not even the Small-Holders' Party dared to oppose it directly. The Social Democratic Party's leadership had prepared a separate draft plan. Although there was debate between the two labour parties concerning the shape of the final version of the plan, the essential fact nevertheless was that both had seen a planned economy as the prerequisite for the strengthening and further development of the popular democratic system.

Never doubting the certain outcome of the talks of the coalition forces concerning the plan, that it would serve the interests of the popular democracy and those of the workers, the leaders of the trade-union movement began to work out the concrete tasks. In mid-April, the Trade Union Council had called the

trade unions' attention to the need to popularize the plan in the plants, to establish plan-committees in the unions' headquarters, to organize further training of skills which would produce the planned 60,000 new skilled workers and the improvement of manpower management. The trade union, as subsequent events prored, rightfully hoped that the planned economy would eliminate the ever increasing unemployment situation. Already during the first phase of working out the plan, the Communist Party was aware that the plan could only be successfully implemented with structural changes of the capitalist economy and the credit system and through the rapid advance of the position of the working class in the management of the economy. Therefore, once the parties of the coalition had accepted the combined plan of the two labour parties, in May 1947 the Communist Party raised the question of the need *to nationalize the banks* in connection with the introduction of the planned economy.

This had met with the unequivocal resistance of the Small-Holders' Party which protected the interests of the bourgeoisie, petite bourgeoisie and the middle class. And however unavoidable this step was on the part of the Communist Party, in practice the right wing of the Social Democratic Party was also opposed to this measure. This led to the danger that a united front would develop encompassing the big bourgeoisie, the small-holders and extend even to the social democrats' right wing, which could then effectively block the communists. The danger was only made more acute by the way some left-wing social-democrat leaders supported the right wing's tactic of postponement. The Communist Party had clearly seen that the key to any further significant progress of the popular democratic developments lay in the two labour parties acting in concert. In this situation the Communist Party had successfully utilized the strength of the unionized masses. With the assistance of the unions they were able to convince the social-democratic right wing to change its negative stand. In the end, the two labour parties agreed on the nationalization of the leading credit institutions and a common front could face the Small-Holders' Party which only supported the idea of state supervision in this respect. Their struggle was made easier by the fact that the leader of the Small-Holders' Party, Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy, and other leaders of the party had fled abroad in fear of being called to account in connection with the conspiracy. A new leadership arose in the Small-Holders' Party in which the left wing began to play a decisive role and a new government was formed which excluded some of the right-wing Small-Holders. Thus the obstacles to the nationalization of the banks and getting the planned economy under way were removed.

The Communist Party saw the trade-union movement as being one of the most important factors to the success of the planned economy and urged that the unions be taken into the central directing organs in charge of the plan. The communists could point to the unions' contribution to keeping prices at a stable level, which was indispensable to the planned economy, through the committees of price control, which were established with the active cooperation of the unions. With the supervisory role set up within the framework of the trade-union

movement, it was possible to defeat the price increases worked out by the National Federation of Industrialists. All of this contributed to the relatively favourable economic climate for the introduction of the planned economy in August 1947.

The main, above-discussed events of the first half of 1947 led to a further strengthening of the leftist revolutionary forces on election day, August 31st. The Hungarian Communist Party had received 22.2 per cent of the votes cast and emerged as the nation's strongest political party out of the electoral struggle. The coalition (including the Hungarian Communist Party, the Social Democratic Party, the National Peasant Party and the Independent Small-Holders' Party) had received 60.8 per cent of the votes and 66 per cent of the Parliamentary mandates.[13] And since the Small-Holders' Party had by and large rid itself of its rightist elements, it strengthened the left with its votes. The 60 per cent majority of the coalition had meant a qualitative change as compared to the former situation. This was one of the most important prerequisites for the coming total victory of workers' power.

WORKERS' POWER IS VICTORIOUS

The popular front type of coalition that was set up as a consequence of the elections provided a stable base for stepping up the pace of the socialist revolutionary transformation for which conditions had become ripe by that time. In September 1947, a government was formed which was the direct transitional link to the workers' power and which made further economic and political achievements possible. In November, the law on the nationalization of the banks, and the companies connected with them, was introduced, which was a decisive blow to the economic strongholds of big capital. With the execution of that law, 87 per cent of the heavy industry, the whole of public transportation and one third of foreign trade was transferred to state control. Out of 453,000 workers in industries and mining, 253,000 worked in the socialized sector.

In other words, such fundamental changes in the structure of the national economy had set in which were synonymous with the decisive victory of the socialist revolution. The people's power, led by the working class, which had executed this task had also solved the historical task of creating the dictatorship

[13] Nearly 40 per cent of the votes was divided among several small parties outside the coalition. The representatives of the unions were on the lists of the labour parties just as in 1945. That practice had been agreed upon (by the two labour parties and the trade unions) before the 1945 elections. The viewpoint of the Communist Party and the communist leaders of the union movement was that the unions could play an important role in the electoral cooperation of the two labour parties in this way, while the social democrats also considered that before, when the unions had had a separate list of candidates, mainly communists had been elected to the Provisional National Assembly. The trade unions were very well represented numerically by both elections, for example in 1947 the metalworkers and the construction workers could boast of twenty-four representatives in the National Assembly.

of the proletariat. In other words, the people's democratic power had developed to the stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

During the last months of 1947, with the worsening of the international situation and in the midst of a rapidly changing society, the Hungarian Communist Party had placed greater than ever emphasis on winning the broad masses. The leaders of the Party had again assigned a role of key importance to the trade-union movement. The communists who were active in the leadership of the unions took as their starting point the necessity of winning the several hundred thousands of union members who were without party affiliations. They had concluded that it was important for the unions to have a separate identity, that the principles and practice of party direction must be reviewed, the relationships of the trade unions and the labour parties set in order and that trade-union democracy be increased and made more effective.

The views published by the Communist Party at the end of 1947 on the question of Party direction and the unions basically outlined those norms already stated by Lenin which gave a particularly broad scope of activity to the unions after the victory of the socialist revolution. This initiative of the communists was warmly greeted by the left-wing social democrats, who were by that time engaged in open battle with their party's right wing, because they saw further encouraging possibilities of the three-way cooperation between the unions and the two parties. But the problem of a final resolution of principles, which would take into consideration the new power relations, was relegated to the background by the preparations that were going on at an increasingly rapid pace towards *the unification of the two labour parties.*

The social democrats, functionaries as well as rank and file members, came ideologically close to the Communist Party in ever increasing numbers in the course of the revolutionary changes occurring at the end of 1947 and as a consequence of the defeat of the right-wing social democratic leaders who opposed the merger. During the first months of 1948 there was a veritable landslide as members of the Social Democratic Party joined the Communist Party not only individually, but did so collectively, en masse in several plants. The Social Democratic Party Congress held between March 6 and 8, 1948, at which the left wing was victorious on every question, authorized the leadership, as the decision published by the March 7 (1948) issue of *Népszava* stated, to "begin negotiations with the leadership of the Hungarian Communist Party without delay concerning the creation of certain ideological, political and organizational preconditions necessary to the formation of a united single party". In other words, the practical aspects of the merger were on the agenda. (The movement from below favouring the merger was concluded by the unification congress held in June 1948.) The unified trade-union movement had carried out an important mission in bringing about the conditions necessary for the merger; it indeed proved to be a good preparatory school for the gradual total unification of the working class. This had been proved by the over three years of union activities, defending the interests of the workers economically and politically in which

communists, social democrats and those without party affiliations took part, fighting for the common goal, the achievement of workers' power.

The first national conference of trade-union leaders was held on March 20–21, 1948 which essentially concluded the struggle of organized labour for the proletarian dictatorship. Despite the lack of a precise theoretical analysis of the contemporary social and economic changes, the March Conference had basically correctly evaluated the essence of the changes in power relationship that had occurred during the last few months of 1947. It sought to concentrate on making progress in the practice of trade-union democracy, in the work of the plant committees, on the front of labour discipline and production, in establishing organizations in all branches of industry and on organizationally overhauling the trade unions.

The Conference was very emphatic on the necessity of extending democracy within the unions and strictly observing the voluntary nature of membership. It pointed to the harmful consequences of not infrequent practices which had no regard for collective demands and allowed two-three union bosses to control the union, who by democracy understood the right of the members to stick their dues-stamps into their membership books. General Secretary, István Kossa, said that "we want to see the kind of leaders who are liked and respected by the masses", because such leaders are capable of establishing a voluntary discipline among the members on the basis of union democracy and thus help to prevent any conflicts that may arise on account of the demands of certain groups and sections colliding with general public interests, however temporary and transitional such a breakdown of the usual harmony may be. To be certain, the strikes and struggles around the wage policy during the previous three years had played a part in enabling the National Conference to account realistically for the internal contradictions arising out of the conflicts between the workers' just demands and the overall interests of the public and the effect of these on the construction of socialism. The chief aim of improving the educational work of the unions was to give more effective orientation to the leadership regarding the nature of the complicated social situation.

It is understandable that during the first half of 1948 the questions of production became more important than ever in the lives of the plants and in the activities of the unions. As Lenin had pointed out, once the working class has seized state power, has "expropriated the expropriators", there necessarily comes to the forefront the fundamental task of creating a social system superior to capitalism, namely, raising the productivity of labour, and in this connection (and for this purpose) securing better organization of labour;[14] that is, through the new organization of labour, the creation of a new socialist attitude to labour and the development of a conscious labour discipline. It was not accidental that the *socialist work competition* which started on March 15th really got going on

[14] V.I. Lenin: *Collected Works*. Vol. 27, p. 257. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965.

a nation-wide scale when all industries employing more than one hundred workers were nationalized, when the "expropriation of the expropriators" became a concrete reality for several hundreds of thousands of workers, when in hundreds of plants at workers' meetings the capitalists were replaced by those new working-class managers who were entrusted with that task at the headquarters of the ironworkers' union by the proletarian state on March 25th. Thus four fifths of the manufacturing industry together with almost the entire mining industry belonged to the socialist sector of the national economy.

Already during the first year of the planned economy, the union-initiated competition movement, which in a few weeks involved more than 70 per cent of the workers, became an important lever in raising production, labour discipline and the workers' socialist consciousness. The first champion plants and the champion worker movement were born, which expressed the creativity and productive power of the working masses. The brigade system was established, which differed qualitatively from the work groups, in order to carry out tasks as a unit putting into practice the socialist principle of collectivity through which they effectively contributed to increasing production and, with that, to the formation of the new socialist type of man.

Still in its infancy and fresh in content the socialist competition of labour was, of course, not quite free of errors. The symptoms of "infantile disorders" showed up in the primitive forms and methods. In fact, later on during the years of the personality cult, the movements for increased productivity were compromised as a consequence of the artificial over-exaggerated drives. However, this does not diminish the fact that socially organized socialist labour had produced such valuable traits, which are still thriving as organic components of socialist consciousness, of economic and social progress, although with a different content and in a different form. The union-initiated movements for productivity played a significant role in terminating the era of shortages and hardship by 1948 and that already in the first year of the Three Year Plan it was possible to guarantee the economic conditions necessary for the total liquidation of capitalism and for the final victory of the proletariat.

The March Conference of trade-union leaders decided on the earliest possible development of the modern organizational structure of the trade-union movement, viz. *the industrial branch organizations,* in order to search the possibilities of taking the socialist path and to ensure its preconditions which became fully ripe only by the middle of 1948.

It is understandable that the trade unions, as the protector of the interests of the working class, of the broad working masses, always had to be on the alert for the most suitable organizational forms and frameworks for the tasks developing out of the economic and social transformation in order to render effective service to the democratic and later proletarian state.

The old organizational forms, split along trade lines, were still to be more or less of service to the economic and political class struggle during the two-three years following the Liberation, but with the arrival of the dictatorship of the

proletariat, they had become quite outdated. Hungarain experiences also began to prove the correctness of Lenin's thesis, which he stated in April 1920 at the Trade Unions' Third All-Russian Congress, to the effect that when the time is favourable for the creation of the proletarian dictatorship "all the guilds and craft unions become obsolete, play a backward role, they are retrograded ...".[15] It became obvious that the changed economic and social relations had not only made possible but actually necessary the initiative of the masses and the gradual creation of a modern organizational framework for the development of trade-union and plant democracy. This was taken into consideration when the transformation of the unions according to industrial branches and occupations began. The new national scope of some unions only developed gradually and only in 1949–1950 did the nineteen trade unions emerge which took the place of the fifty trade organizations that had existed after the Liberation.

However, the development of a central and national scope of the new unions solved only one of the tasks of the transformation. Parallel to this, the new industrial place of work organizations had to be set up as well on the basis of the principle that in any one industry only one trade union be active, one which is appropriate to the branch of industry and that every worker of that plant belong to the same union. In the course of the various debates and ideas which took shape by mid-1948 concerning the structure of the plant organizations, the notion came up to reorganize, and even to terminate the system of plant committees, which were organs of great historical merit benefiting the workers' power. In other words, according to practice up to that time the trade-union shop stewards had operated on the basis of the trades in a plant, whereas the plant committees had been created to represent the collective of workers of the whole of a plant, that is, on the basis of the principle of industrial branches. Although the plant committees had been directed by trade-union headquarters and they had attended to various trade-union business as well, they could never entirely fill the role of the local union leadership. This was due not only to the practice of organizing on a trade basis but also because they were workers' power organs initiated by the state and not by the movement. This fact partly explains why they were somewhat isolated from the trade-union movement within the plants.

It was in this way that the situation had developed whereby the trade unions failed to have a suitable and unified plant leadership during the years following the Liberation. Absent too were the practice grounds of trade-union democracy: the plant groups and grass roots organizations. At the same time, with the victory of workers' power it became an ever more pressing need to mobilize the over one and a half million organized workers for the completion of the national economic plans, for increasing production both quantitatively and qualitatively, all of which were basic prerequisites for social progress. The workers had to be ensured representation of their rightful interests, conduct of their social and cultural affairs and they had to be given technical and ideological training. The degree of

[15] V.I. Lenin: *Collected Works*. Vol. 30, p. 512. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965.

effectiveness of the activities of the trade unions was made dependent on to what extent they were able to rally the entire membership, broaden plant and union democracy and find the suitable method of centrally guiding a movement which was having to come to grips with various far-reaching responsibilities, in short, to correctly apply the principle of democratic centralism. Thus it is clear that in the middle of 1948 when the struggle against capital was only secondary, the question of the industrial committees had to be subordinated to the general interests of the trade-union movement which involved 85 per cent of all workers. All the more so, since under the new given circumstances it became impossible to demarcate the respective responsibilities of the unions and of the plant committees. The trade-union movement could not very well resign its traditional function of protecting the workers' interests but neither could it shrink from its new function of organizing and directing drives for higher and better productivity. Working within a socialist perspective they could not opt for allowing the plant committees to continue functioning in a supervisory role alongside the union organs. In that case the unions would have resigned their own social supervisory role, which in principle they could not do without and which a Marxist-Leninist trade-union policy cannot leave out of consideration. Once we have considered these points, it becomes clear and justified on the part of the leaders of the unions and of the United Party (the Hungarian Working People's Party) to urge, as they did in July 1948, the combining of the plant committees and shop stewards into a single industrial union group.

It is obvious from the above that the leaders of the trade-union movement did not set out from the premise of maintaining or not the plant committees, but from how the framework of the industrial branch trade-union organizations could be best developed to serve the cardinal objective which was to transfer the bulk of union work to the plants themselves. The main problem was the creation of local union organs most suitable to the new demands. In other words, the first thing to do was not merely to terminate the former system but to transform it, to unify the plant committees and shop stewards into a homogeneous, active union organ.

The factory union organs, which were elected on the basis of the principles worked out in mid-1948, kept the "plant committee" name. But these plant committees were no longer separate organs of workers' power, but rather, they functioned as the united plant leadership of the unions of the industrial branches. At the same time, they could exercise the rights, which had gone with the former type of plant committee, at those companies which were still private enterprises. All in all, the new organizational frameworks were such that they could have fulfilled their functions more adequately than ever before, in protecting the workers' interests, deepening plant and union democracy and supervising to whatever extent necessary the direction of production.

It is for this reason that when we examine the question of the termination of the plant committees, which were created in 1944–1945, we should not look for the essence of the problem in the organizational reformations, but rather, look as to whether or not the continuously changing unions and their plant organs received

the necessary rights to keep the functions, to continue the tradition of the plant committees that were modified to suit the changing circumstances after the victory of the proletariat. A significant number of plant activists, middle cadre and the national leadership of the trade-union movement, which encompassed the overwhelming majority of the nation's white and blue collar workers, had become steeled in the course of the crucial political battles. Furthermore, the trade unions had amassed valuable experiences in economic production, plant organizing and plant management – experiences which the plant committees centrally directed by them had gained in the course of the anti-capitalist struggles and through the several years of constructive work. Thus the soil was prepared for the successful initiation of workers' democracy within the condition of the proletarian dictatorship, relying on the new revolutionary traditions according to the particular Hungarian conditions.

When the decision was made to establish the new, united plant union organs, the leaders of the trade-union movement also carefully demarcated the relationship of the proletarian state and the unions. Among other things they declared: "The trade unions must protect their independence and self-reliance in addition to cooperating with the economic and cultural organs of the democratic state. It must not even seem that the unions are organs of the state." They did not forget the Leninist directive that it is part of the unions' responsibility to correct possible errors and excesses which may arise out of "bureaucratic distortions" of the state and economic organs. They pointed out that, although the interests of the unions were not in contradiction with the general objectives of the state, they might nevertheless "in certain cases and on certain particular questions" be in conflict with "the state and with the higher interests of industrial management", and for that reason the unions' function of the protection of interests must be more than the unconditional affirmation of the conduct of the organs of the socialist state, they must strive to uncover and solve the transitional contradictions as they occur. The Seventeenth Congress of the Trade Unions in October 1948 wanted to ensure a supervisory function for the unions in certain crucial areas of interests: "in nationalized factories where, although the management represents the people's state, errors and defaults may still occur at the expense of the workers". They placed great importance on the supervision of the leaders by the masses, the practice of collective leadership and the development of the broadest democracy possible.[16]

On the basis of all of the above we can state that the economic, political and ideological struggles of the trade unions, in close cooperation with the labour parties, was a factor of decisive importance, during those years of great historical changes, in the reconstruction of the nation, in the winning of the working masses and in the heroic struggle for the victory of the proletariat.

[16] *Szakszervezetek a szocializmusért* (Trade unions for socialism). Budapest, 1948, pp. 34–75.

THE HUNGARIAN TRADE UNIONS IN THE ERA OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIALISM

by
Márton Buza

In Hungary, the struggle between the working class and the capitalist class was decided by 1948–49: the working class, allied with the working peasants, assumed the power. That achievement had altered fundamentally the position and the role of the trade unions. The construction of socialism began, and the primary task of the unions was to support and assist in that work.

I. THE HUNGARIAN UNIONS IN THE INITIAL PERIOD OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIALISM. THE PLACE OF THE UNIONS IN THE SOCIALIST SYSTEM

The coming to power of the working class brought fundamental changes in the role, place and tasks of the unions. The 17th Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions, held between October 17 and October 20, 1948 in Budapest, dealt with these developments.

Above all else, the Congress analysed the changes introduced by the new power relationship. Those were as follows:

The working class had become the ruling class, the sole holder of power after a period of having been only a participator in the exercise of power. Now power, and consequently the direction of the society, of governmental, economic and cultural life, was in the hands of the working class. The unions now became the organizations of the ruling class and consequently a new content entered into their functions and new methods of work were to be employed. The major role of the unions, namely, serving the workers' interests, is closely linked with making effective the leading role of the working class and fulfilling its historical mission: the liquidation of the class society and exploitation.

With the merger of the two labour parties (viz. the Hungarian Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party), the union rivalries had come to an end together with that kind of agitation which had only created divisions among the union members and tied down considerable energies at the expense of far more important tasks. The Congress could well afford to declare proudly that labour unity had been preserved against all attacks since the previous Congress. According to the declaration of the Congress:

"The merger of the Hungarian Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party, that is, the formation of the Hungarian Working People's Party has decisively strengthened the unity of the trade unions. The defeat of the opportunist right-wing social-democratic leadership and the organizational and ideological defeat of the right-wing social-democratic line was at the same time the defeat of the right-wing union leaders who had attacked the unity of the trade unions, sabotaged production and sought to initiate fratricidal conflicts within the working class."[1]

The establishment of a united labour party and its leading role in society created fundamentally new and favourable possibilities for the unions to carry out their protective and educational activities.

A new situation was created by the establishment of the workers' state, when the capitalist class was excluded from power. The first result of this, after the nationalization of the banks, was the nationalization of the plants employing over one hundred workers. With that and other, although not equally significant, nationalizations, the socialist state became the employer of the majority of the union members. The 17th Congress called attention to the fact that this expanded the concept of "protection of interests" because it was in the interest of the unions and their members to concern themselves with production, to increase it, since it was a precondition to any improvement of their standard of living and general conditions. It was for that reason that the Congress dealt, for the first time ever, with the questions of production in detail. It analysed production, the conditions necessary for an increase in productivity, particularly the development of the socialist labour competition, recognizing that this was one of the most important factors in developing the economy. It was for this reason that the Congress assigned the task of completing the Three Year Plan in two years and five months. In determining this task, the Congress started with the understanding that the achievement of power, the knowledge that the workers were working for themselves constituted such a force that a more rapid economic growth than planned was made possible.

The changed nature of power had an essential effect on the further activities, social position and role of the unions. Antal Apró, Secretary General of the National Council of Trade Unions, stated this as follows at the 17th Congress: "The Hungarian trade unions will continue to do everything in the interest of strengthening the Hungarian people's democratic state power. They do this because the present Hungarian state is the people's state and the working class has a leading role in it ... The close cooperation between the democratic state power and the unions does not jeopardize the independence and self-reliance of the unions because we are cooperating not with a state which is foreign to the working class, which is hostile to it, which is the state of the exploiting class, but rather with our own state, the people's state. For this reason, the strengthening of the unions means the strengthening of the people's democratic state power and

[1] *Szakszervezetek a szocializmusért* (Trade unions for socialism). Budapest, 1948, p. 1..

the strengthening of the democratic state power also strengthens the working class and its trade unions".[2]

The new situation was that although a socialist type of state became the main employer, it could not made the unions forget that they had to protect the interests of their members, who owned the means of production, but were at the same time employees as well, within the framework of socialism. For that reason the Congress paid particular attention to tasks connected with raising the living stadard. Of those, particularly important was the objective to eliminate unemployment and misery and the demands to implement a series of socio-political measures. It is worthwhile to mention the unification of the two big social security agencies[3] and the demand that the unions play a directing role in social security.

The Congrèss recognized that in the course of the construction of socialism, the bourgeoisie had to be liquidated as a class and that this fundamentally altered the tasks of safeguarding the workers' interests.

Although under socialism individual and social interests basically coincide, some non-antagonistic differences in interest and contradictions may remain, or indeed, appear. Therefore, it is up to the unions to create harmony between the workers' daily economic interests and the success of their social, class interests. That is why the unions participate in the realization of the historical tasks of the construction of socialism and since it is the most fundamental interest of the working class to construct the socialist social and economic order, the unions approve of socialism.

It is an objective social need on the part of the members to expect the unions to attend to the representation of the everyday interests of the employees and, through the realization of the general demands and the progress of socialist construction, to concretely ensure improvements in the conditions of the various sectors of the working masses and raise their standard of living.

The fact that the working class has possessed power and become the owner of the means of production has led to the expansion of the role of the unions as a school. The masses have become involved in the administration and direction of the economy and in the solution of social problems. With the development of socialist consciousness, and of voluntary social activities, workers' participation in administration, in production and in distribution as well as in providing leadership in public life, becomes a factor. The unions integrate their members' interests and effect a harmonization between the interests of various sectors of workers and between those of individuals and society as a whole. The protection and representation of class interests is not contrary to, indeed, it is in harmony with, the protection and representation of the interests of individual workers. The daily

[2] Ibid. pp. 46–47.

[3] Of the two agencies, one was OTI (National Social Security Agency) which was for the blue collar workers and the other was MABI (Private Firms' Employees' Security Agency) which took care of white collar workers.

and long-term, the individual and collective interests of the workers are part and parcel of the unions' activities toward safeguarding the workers' interest. By exposing the contradictions as they appear and by solving tensions and contradictions, the unions strengthen the workers confidence in the socialist system.

A new situation was created by the recognition that within the framework of socialism the social significance, organizational strength and responsibility of the unions were to be greatly enlarged.

Union activities expanded to include every aspect of social, economic and cultural life, serving to provide an organizational framework for the creativeness of the workers and for the realization of their participation in leadership and administration. By broadly encompassing the working masses and by creating a democratic class organization, they signified a social guarantee for the successful realization of the workers' interests. The unions participated in the formulation of every law, decree or any other type of measure which touched upon the workers' economic and social position, their living and working conditions. It is for that reason that great circumspection, correct judgements and a sense of responsibility are required to adequately attend to the safeguarding of the workers' interests.

The unions simultaneously satisfy both old and new social needs in the period of the construction of socialism. Not only the continuation of historical traditions dictate the function of the unions but primarily it is the given social system, the social needs of socialism which influence it.

The unions have become the organizations of the ruling class but they are not organs of coercion, rather, they base themselves on the voluntarism and initiative of the workers. Their activities have been unimpeded, the conditions for organizing and being active have been favourable and there have been no political, legal or other types of coercion to impede their movement to serve the interests of the working class. On the contrary, they have enjoyed broadly defined rights which have made it possible for them to exercise the protection of the employees' interests. This they did by ensuring the workers' participation in the administration and in the general life of the place of work and society. They were also able to mobilize the workers to realize their social objectives through their organizations and educational functions.

The 17th Congress summed up that all this indicated that the unions were a socialist type of organization in the period of the construction of socialism.

Organizationally independently, the unions accomplish the tasks assigned by the laws of history and the construction of socialism on the basis of, and with the aid of, the direction of the leading force of society: the Communist Party. Their members are organized to construct socialism, mobilized to further social progress, induced to take political positions and prompted to conscious action. This membership, being almost synonymous with the whole of the workers, living off wages and salaries, have never been socially homogeneous. There are many types of inner stratifications: trade, sex, age, education, level of consciousness etc.

and their effects have been present in the life of the unions. This lends great significance to the "schooling function" of the unions. By putting into effect the organizational principle of democratic centralism, the unions have been able to integrate the safeguarding and representation of interests with the educational work carried out among the workers. In other words, under socialism the unions have continued to protect and represent the interests of the workers and to assist in furthering those interests, while at the same time, they have also educated their members to recognize and serve general, overall social interests. It is in this way that they have helped the working class to fulfil its historical task.

After defining the basic tasks, the 17th Congress of the unions dealt with the inner, organizational questions of the union movement from many aspects, because that was one of the preconditions necessary for the accomplishment of those tasks. We shall give a detailed analysis of this in the section titled "The trade union as an organization and a movement".

The progress, which followed the Congress, confirmed this profound analysis of the situation. It gave a great momentum to socialist construction. The Three Year Plan was successfully completed within two years and five months; indeed, as a result of the workers' enthusiasm, the plan was overfulfilled. At the end of 1949, instead of the 10 per cent set forth in the plan, industrial production surpassed by 28 per cent the 1938 level and agricultural production was almost at the 1938 level. There was no more unemployment in Hungary and the workers' and employees' real wages had increased, surpassing by 4–5 per cent the level of 1938, the last pre-war year. Hygienic measures and social security had developed considerably. There were one million more people benefiting from social security in 1949 than in 1938. Basic changes had been introduced in cultural life as well. At every level, the number of those finishing school almost doubled, the children of workers and peasants were studying in the institutes of higher learning and thousands of adults who wanted to learn were attending workers' night schools.

At the end of the Three Year Plan, further nationalizations were carried out; this time an end was put to capitalist ownership of the mines, factories, transport and large-scale commercial enterprises. The unions had greatly contributed to the results primarily through their concern with production and with the organization of socialist labour competitions.

The first of January, 1950 marked the beginning of the implementation of the First Five Year Economic Plan in Hungary. The momentum of socialist construction increased further. The socialist labour competition had become a mass phenomenon. This was accounted for by the fact that the workers had recognized that the living standard rose proportionately to increased production. During the first year of the Five Year Plan industrial production increased 27 per cent, instead of the planned 21 per cent, and agricultural production showed a 5–6 per cent increase over the previous year. Such a significant overfulfillment of the plan had resulted in a major elevation of the objectives at the 2nd Congress of the Hungarian Working People's Party in February 1951. Accordingly, investments were raised from 51 billion to 80 billion *forints*, industrial produc-

tion was to be increased by 200 per cent, instead of the original 86 per cent, in five years and the standard of living was to be raised by 50–55 per cent, instead of the previously determined 35 per cent. It had soon become evident that this was not realistic. The distorted economic policy was the result of an incorrect analysis of the situation. That decision was incorrect and was accompanied by other errors; one of these was deviation from the line adopted at the 17th Congress regarding the role and responsibilities of the unions. The sectarian and dogmatic outlook which had gained the upper hand in the Party and state administrations affected the life and activities of the unions as well.

On July 4, 1950 the Political Committee of the Hungarian Working People's Party discussed certain problems of union work and made harsh judgement on the unions in several essential aspects. That action had essentially paralyzed the unions because it had covertly expressed the idea that the Party, without any other social agent, including the unions, could construct socialism by itself. As a result of that decision the following distortions developed:

The Party directly intervened in the management of the unions and involved itself on every level of their daily life. This deeply violated union democracy, and the unions' independence became a mere formality.

The entire activity of the unions were almost exclusively limited to assisting production and the organization of socialist labour competitions.

The unions' function in safeguarding the workers' interests was narrowed down. Only social security and labour safety, both of which were transferred from being state responsibilities to the unions, and social welfare constituted the unions' sphere of authority.

The unions were forced out of their participation in the formation of national policies. Their role became limited to the *execution* of tasks which were assigned by the Party. At the same time this had prevented the unions from passing on the real feelings, worries and problems of the working masses to the leading bodies of the Party and of the state. Under these circumstances the unions did not even have the opportunity to make recommendations for the correction of errors.

As known, the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Working People's Party began to deal with the errors at its June 1953 meeting. But the correction of the errors was greatly impeded by the activities of the revisionists who exploited the committed errors, using them as a pretext to launch an attack against the people's state. The clique rivalries between the sectarians and the revisionists also impeded the correction of the errors. And, additionally, in the course of analysing the mistakes they did not deal with the situation of the unions, with the necessity of correcting the committed distortions concerning the role of the unions.

The ninth plenary of the National Council of Trade Unions in September 1955 emphatically expressed the need for the unions to have a say in the distribution of the national income and in the drawing up of plans concerning the rising of the standard of living. However, there was no time for the implementation of the demands. Exploiting the struggle between the sectarians and the revisionists, which had completely got out of hand, internal and foreign counter-revolutionary

forces moved into action and in October 1956 the bloody counter-revolutionary insurrection broke out. In the struggle for the protection of the workers' power and its reinforcement, the unions themselves played a significant role.

The Secretary General of the National Council of Trade Unions, Sándor Gáspár, concluded the following primary lesson from the errors committed: "... it must never be forgotten that the working class is not the instrument of workers' power, and not its object, but its possessor. The working class uses its power as an instrument to realize its interests, ideas, coinciding with the interests of the entire people and with social progress. From all this it follows that in the society building Socialism, the leadership – operating on the basis of confidence on the part of the working class, the toilers – must share all its problems with the ruling class, i. e. the working class. It must provide various and regular information to the working class and must draw it into the creation, implementation and control of national, regional and local policy-making. The struggle for the construction of Socialism cannot produce adequate results without the working class taking share in the exercise of power: serious difficulties, prolonged regressions and interruptions may ensue during the progress. The strength of labour power – along with other important factors – lies mainly in the fact that the toilers, first of all the masses of workers, know, desire and operatively promote what the state of the working class, on the basis of Party guidance wants to achieve. As for the development of this type of activity by the working class, the trade unions are decisive factors. Narrowing, restricting of their role is equal to the deceleration, deformation of Socialist construction."[4]

After the counter-revolution both the unions and the Party took good care of and still continue not to lose sight of this lesson. This is the main explanation of the results attained by our working people in the construction of socialism and of the growth of the role, respect and influence of the unions which have gained the recognition of the entire international union movement.

The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (the name of the reorganized Communist Party after the 1956 counter-revolution) has been paying great attention to the development of correct relations with the unions ever since the defeat of the counter-revolution. It has analysed and defined the place and role of the unions in society through the basic teachings of Marxism-Leninism and by taking into consideration historical experiences.

The May 10, 1966 resolution of the Political Committee fundamentally laid down the unions' relationship to the Party and the state. Accordingly, the unions are independent organizations since they have an independent role in the socialist social structure. On the one hand, they are organizations for the representation of the workers and for safeguarding their interests and, on the other hand, they have the function of giving schooling in direction, management and education. The independence of the unions does not mean political independence, they do not

[4] Sándor Gáspár: *Role of the Hungarian Trade Unions in the Construction of Socialism.* Budapest, 1971, pp. 37–38.

have an independent political platform but rather, they share and adopt the objectives of the revolutionary party of the working class, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. The unions consciously follow those class objectives which only the Party is able to decide upon. The unions accept the leadership role of the Party because this provides them with security in the midst of the complicated conditions of the class struggle.

The highest forum of the unions, the congress, has stated in its charter, as a voluntarily adopted responsibility, that "the Hungarian unions carry out their activities in harmony with the theoretical, political and ideological direction of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party but do so as independent organizations ..."[5]

In other words, independence is not the same as "neutrality", as being "disengaged", but, rather, it means a commitment to the Party's political line, that is, it means the commitment whereby the unions organize their activities themselves on the basis of democratic centralism.

The resolution of the Political Committee has stated that the Party's directives will not specify or go into the details of the tasks set for the unions because that is the responsibility of the union leadership. Party guidance is a multi-faceted and complex process which involves not only setting objectives but also giving guidance on the basis of the lessons derived in the course of the concrete process of the actualization of the objectives. The leadership role of the Party actually refers to guidance rather than concrete leadership or directives. Thus the opportunity exists for the leading union organs to make their independent decisions, to organize the forces necessary to carry out the tasks and to exercise the responsibility accompanying their decisions.

It is the duty of the communists working in the leading union organs to creatively employ the Party's theoretical and political guidelines in the union resolutions. In other words, Party guidance expects and needs independent creative contributions on the part of the unions. It demands theoretical conviction, rationality and a method of work and a leadership which are appropriate to the characteristics and activities of mass organizations.

On account of the mass organizational nature of the unions, it is necessary that its democratically elected leading bodies decide on the concrete tasks of the functions of the representing and safeguarding of interests and education as well as deal with the ways and means of carrying out these tasks. The leading bodies of the unions decide independently upon the organization of their everyday activities, on the assignments of the union organizations and methods of work. The decisions of the higher levels are binding upon the lower levels of the organization.

The elected union organs have a twofold obligation: they must account about their activities to their membership as well as to the higher level organs of the

[5] *A Magyar Szakszervezetek XXII. Kongresszusa (Rövidített Jegyzőkönyv)* (The 22nd Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions [Abbreviated minutes]). Budapest, 1971, p. 331. (Henceforth: *A Magyar Szakszervezetek XXII. kongresszusa ...*)

unions. In other words, union activities are not carried out at the command of the Party nor at its intervention but on the basis of the decisions and resolutions of the leading organs of the unions.

The 1966 resolution pays particularly close attention to the relationship between the unions and the socialist state. It states that the relationship between the unions and the socialist state is the relationship of organizations working for the implementation of the same class-objectives. The socialist state puts into practice the historical mission of the working class, the construction of socialism, through the various organs at its disposal. The unions are working toward these same objectives through social means, through the movement, namely, by developing social activity and socialist consciousness among the broad masses. Both the state and the unions consider their guideline, their ideology to be Marxism-Leninism, the scientific world-view of the working class. It is these similarities which provide the principled basis for the cooperation between the state authorities and the unions under socialism.

The relationship between the socialist state and the unions is specific in so far as both serve the same class-objectives but in a different capacity and with different methods. The relationship between the socialist state and the unions is not that of superior and subordinate. The cooperation is based on the fact that the socialist state guarantees all those rights for which the unions have struggled for a century. It guarantees freedom of action for the unions' organizations and for their exercise of the rights to the protection of interests without restrictions.

The independence of the unions can only be complete under socialism. The socialist state and its authorities do not interfere with the everyday activities of the unions, nor with their by-laws and the election of their leading organs. The state authorities respect the independence of the unions. They do not supervise nor can they call to account the union leadership. They do not interfere with their handling of their budget and do not restrict their handling of those matters which lie within their field of responsibility (social security, vacation, etc.). The unions participate in the work of the state organs by way of their personal representatives. The unions exercise a certain social supervision over the economic activities of the state-owned companies. (They supervise whether or not the laws concerning conditions of work are strictly observed, whether collective agreements are carried out, whenever the need may arise they use their veto, they take care of supervising safety measures and the social supervision of commerce, etc.)

For the successful implementation of the interests of society, in which the interests of employees as expressed by the unions are also integrated, the socialist state has at its disposal various administrative means, it works out and uses material and moral incentives, if at all necessary it uses the coercive powers of the state and gains validity for the realization of the laws, decrees and directives. The unions, with due regard for the society's interest, represent and protect the on-the-job, craft interests of the workers and through social activation based on socialist consciousness, by convincing and educating the workers, the unions involve them in the management, in the economy and in the numerous tasks of

social existence. It becomes evident that the method and style of work are different between the state and the unions. The basic specifics of state guidance are regulations, directives and coercion, whereas the fundamental method of union work is conviction and education.

To say that under socialism the unions become "state organizations", that they surrender the safeguarding of the workers' interests, is a hostile misinterpretation. The basic role of the unions, even under socialism, is to assist the development of an ever improving life for the workers, to endeavour to ensure an increasing standard of living for the masses, to improve working conditions and to improve social and cultural services. And the unions active in the socialist countries do indeed satisfy these requirements!

"Under capitalist conditions the labour movement, the trade unions' struggle is overwhelmingly 'against something', in socialist conditions their struggle is overwhelmingly, 'for something'. This 'against something' and 'for something' is of course not something intangible. In capitalism the trade unions can defend the workmen's interests only in the fight against the capitalists and the state power of capitalists. In the Socialist system on the other hand they can fulfill their task of safeguarding the workers' interests by their activity in the construction of Socialism."[6]

Under socialism the unions are legally recognized organs of the workers for the representation and protection of their interests. (In Hungary, the Labour Code defines this right of the workers and of the unions.) This by no means indicates that the unions are "state" organizations. Certain bourgeois ideologists conclude that since under capitalism the unions constitute an opposition this should be equally the case under socialism. Under socialism, however, there is no need for the unions to be in opposition. The representatives of that concept "forget" the most essential fact that no longer is the working class an oppressed and exploited class but, rather, it is in power and it is the owner of the means of production. Understanding this, it becomes clear that there is no need for the unions to act as an opposition.

This does not mean, however, that there cannot be differences of opinion, that there cannot be contradictions between the government of the workers' state and the unions, between the economic leaders and the unions. The unions are independent organizations and not the servants or executors of the government's policies; they themselves determine the content of their activities on the basis of the protection of the interests of the workers and employees and consequently there do occur differences of opinion between the state-economic organizations and the unions. These differences of views do not in any way endanger the social-political order of socialism since the differences do not concern the objectives to be attained but, rather, they are about the means and methods to be used in the realization of those objectives.

[6] S. Gáspár: Op. cit., pp. 48–49.

The basis of safeguarding the workers' interest on the part of the unions is that they study the problems through the eyes of the workers and consequently their opinions and observations express the interest of the employees. The strengthening and protection of the workers' state is the foremost interest of every worker under socialism because it is precisely the workers' state which can most thoroughly realize their economic, social, cultural, etc. interests.

The following principles guide the relationship between the unions and the organs of the state:

The state administration apparatus is obliged to request the opinions of the National Council of Trade Unions and of the industrial branch unions when it comes to problems concerning the living conditions of those earning salaries and wages. The National Council of Trade Unions and the unions themselves are to request the opinions of the government and of the ministries before bringing out any resolution which are closely connected with the latters' activities.

One of the basic principles of the relations between the state and the unions is that differences of opinion must be worked out. The state organizations draw up laws and decrees but, before bringing them into effect, they are obligated to discuss them with the respective unions, to request their opinions and, in the case of laws, which have a direct effect on the living conditions, they can only bring them into effect with the unions' approval. In so far as the unions have a differing opinion, an opportunity must be provided for the opinions to be reconciled. This is one of the suitable methods of solving conflicts of interests under socialism.

The unions have the right to publicly take issue with the state administration in the case of a fundamental difference in their views. Publicity is an aspect of the development of socialist democracy, which makes sense only from the point of view of finding the best solution when there are conflicts of interests rather than for reasons of prestige. There are many forms of publicity and it is up to the independent judgement of the unions as to which form, what expression to employ. The main thing is to serve the cause and consequently to render more effective the function of the state organs.

An essential principle of the cooperation of the state and the union organs is that the unions should act on the spot, decisively and in time, against the violators of the laws and decrees concerning working and living conditions and, if that fails to bring results, turn the matter over to a higher level administrative organ.

The unions' functions are also legally codified, they are expressed in our socialist laws, in the Constitution, in the Labour Code and in the laws concerning the socialist companies and in many other laws as well.

The unions are present everywhere where the workers need representation, where workers' affairs are decided. It is indicative of our socialist system that it systematically guarantees the unions those rights and opportunities which are necessary for a thorough and effective representation of interests.

II. THE TRADE UNION AS AN ORGANIZATION AND A MOVEMENT

The organizational strength of the Hungarian unions grew considerably after the Liberation[7] and their membership by October 1948 was 1,600,000. The coming to power of the working class confronted the Hungarian unions with the great task of building up their organization. On the basis of the accumulated experiences, it became clear that the following demands would have to be met as far as the organization of the movement was concerned: the system of organization would have to be based on the principle of democratic centralism and on the organizational base of industrial branches; strong company, institutional and office organizations would need to function, giving an appropriate framework for the development of the masses' social activity; such leading organs would need to operate on branch, area and company levels, which would be an appropriate partner on every level of the state-economic leadership apparatus; the establishment and functioning of such national and district organs would be necessary which could direct and coordinate the unions' activities nationally and by district.

In accordance with these principles the 17th Congress had first of all issued a resolution on the transformation of the craft organizations into industrial branch organizations based on the principle that the union members of a plant, company, institution or office should belong to one union. The so-called industrial branch movement was initiated on the basis of this resolution. By the end of 1975 the number of union members was nearly 4,000,000 and instead of the 41 craft organizations in 1948 we now have only 19 industrial branch-sector unions.

The change to industrial branch organizing was accomplished completely within a short period. Today nineteen unions contain the majority (92.3 per cent) of all those earning salaries and wages. The voluntary principle of membership was implemented successfully and is closely adhered to.

The change to industrial branch organizing guaranteed and guarantees unified leadership and guidelines. The delegates of the nineteen industrial branch unions elect the highest leading body of the Hungarian union movement, the National Council of Trade Unions. The area union organs are similarly established; such are the County Councils of Unions (there are 19 counties in Hungary) and the Budapest Council of Unions. At the present time, the first secretary of every industrial branch or sector union is a member of the National Council of Trade Unions' presidium on which also sits the President of the National Council, its Secretary General, Vice-President and Secretaries together with two leading secretaries of the County Councils of Unions.

The assurance of central leadership, of union unity does not exclude, indeed, it demands independent action on the part of the individual unions just as it expects

[7] See Miklós Habuda's study in this volume.

the union organs of the companies, of the places of work (company union councils, union committees) to carry out independent activities. The smallest union units at the place of work are the union groups with the shop steward at the lead, and several union groups together constitute – generally per workshop or, in the case of offices, per department – local organs with a workshop committee or department committee at their lead. These elect, by way of delegates, the company union council or union committee.

The central leadership of their own union is the main directing organ of the company, plant or office organizations but at the same time, particularly when it comes to policies affecting the area, the County Council of Unions is involved as well. This so-called "double subordination", which follows from the unions being set up as industrial branch or sector and at the same time as area organizations, leads to conflicts and contradictions in many cases (when the trade-union headquarters and the area organ fail to coordinate their arrangements).

The union is not only an organization but also a movement which relies on the activities of many voluntary social activists who give up part of their free time. In 1971 the total number of such union activists was 523,980.

This necessitates effective implementation of union democracy, that is, secret ballots in electing officers for the various posts, the right of members to recall delinquent officers, etc. At the same time this is a tremendous force through which union tasks can be carried out to completion.

The basic task of the union movement is to make sure that the workers participate in the decisions that affect them either in their capacity as owners of the means of production or as employees.

The central problem of the effectiveness of socialist democracy is the workers' participation in the direction of production, in solving the problems of economic management, in decisions and in the supervision of the execution of the decisions. Experience indicates that the participation of the working masses must first of all gain expression in the general political line, in the second place, in the economic decisions and, last but not least, it must be personal in character.

One very important sphere of the actualization of socialist democracy is *plant democracy,* namely, the participation of the workers of socialist state-owned companies, institutions and offices in the management, in the supervision of the work of the managers, in the planning and execution of economic-production tasks and in the decisions regarding major financial, social and cultural questions affecting the workers.

Plant democracy is the manifestation of the workers' participation in the exercise of power and of their relationship to it *as owners of the means of production.* This means that the *content* of plant democracy is the participation of the employed working masses, on the basis of guaranteed political rights, in the management and the conduct of the affairs of the state-owned plants, companies, offices and institutions, in the supervision of the work of the managers, while the *form* of plant democracy means the creation of the prerequisites of that participation and the development of its methods.

It follows from the content of plant democracy that its effectiveness is closely linked to the collective's economic, social and political conditions and therefore it can only be successful through the interaction of all social and state organs.

It also follows from this that besides plant democracy, the one-man-responsible state-economic management is also present as such a central element which is outside of and independent of plant democracy but at the same time in close and inseparable interaction with it. It is well known that under socialism the solution of every task facing society is executed with a dual method, through state and social means and methods. This power structure is a necessary result and at the same time an advantage of socialism over every other social system. Both the state and the social organs have equal responsibilities in the fields of economy, politics, culture and ideology, which they attend to by different methods while the goals remain identical. All of this means that the particular mechanism of plant democracy ensures social control over the state-economic management.

Under our system the plant, company and institutional union councils function as organs of plant democracy. In other words, plant democracy does not have separate organs, organizations or institutions.

"Within the overall circumstances of workers' power, the unions, in their own way and not without contradictions, become the extension of democracy in management and production. Accordingly, the activities of the unions, the functions of the various union forums and organs lend on the one hand a direct opportunity for the masses for public involvement, that is, to participate in management and on the other hand, *the union organs, as the representatives of all the workers, are at the same time the representative bodies of plant democracy as well* (my emphasis, M.B.) which represent all workers at every level of management ..."[8]

What are the factors indicating the necessity for this? It is primarily our historical experience which taught us not to duplicate the workers' representative organs in the companies, offices and institutions, because this had led to a fragmentation of their strength.

In Hungary the unions organizationally encompass the overwhelming majority of workers, nearly 93 per cent. The workers outside of the unions are mostly casual labourers and seasonal workers. In other words, the industrial branch movement, that is, the "one plant – one union" principle-based plant union organs take care of the representation of the entire company collective.

This fact makes it redundant for plant democracy to have a separate and independent organizational form besides the unions. The union movement is quite capable of moulding its own organizational form according to the requirements of plant democracy. A good example of this is the establishment of company union councils which take care of the representation of the entire company collective even at the major, combined corporations.

[8] S. Gáspár: *A magyar szakszervezetek szerepe a szocializmus építésében* (The role of the Hungarian trade unions in the construction of socialism). Budapest, 1968, p. 254.

The plant, or company union councils were established following the recognition of the need for the workers to have at their disposal a broadly democratic body. The meeting of union members was a sufficient enough forum in the workshops or in the small plants. However, in the larger plants, factories, institutions and companies the membership could not have direct participation in the reports and decisions concerning questions affecting the plant, etc. on account of their numbers and departmentalization.

A logical break occurred in the union structure on account of this. At the juncture points of middle and upper levels of leadership only operational types of numerically small union organs were active parallel with economic management. Usually these organs were elected by plant, company, factory, institution, etc. delegates' meetings assembled for that one occasion. No opportunity was provided for their being called to account or to supervise their work between elections. In effect, they violated democracy.

The company union councils, which were elected for the first time in 1966, were suitable for the resolution of these contradictions. Within a democratic organizational structure they have filled the function of representing the membership at the middle and upper levels of the company's administration as well as at the higher union and corresponding state organs.

The union councils are relatively broad, secretly elected democratic representative bodies. Their membership at a plant or factory is 25–30 persons whereas at a company or major corporation or at a national company it may be from 21 to 50 people.

In other words, the company union council is suitable to take care of the function of a members' meeting on the plant, factory or company level. The enforcement of the most important rights that are guaranteed to the union organs always pertains to these organs' scope of operations. This also indicates that the union council is not only a managing body but an important forum of plant democracy as well.

Since the company union organs are at the key positions of decision-making, and thus in their structure generally follow the company organization pattern, it is possible to ensure the continuous functioning of the organs of plant democracy. In other words, a regularly functioning operative union organ is active alongside the managers.

The fact that the unions are active on an area, industrial-branch and national basis makes it possible for them to participate in the management of companies on an area, industrial-branch and national basis, which would be impossible any other way.

Finally, it is union control over plant democracy that provides the opportunity for a unified and political exercise of the rights provided. This possibility follows objectively from the democratic centralism of the unified Hungarian trade-union movement.

Through their function as organs of plant democracy, the unions fill the role of being "schools of leadership, management and guidance". Within the union, the

workers increasingly acquire the knowledge necessary for the organization and management of the company.

The organization and management of a company, which is carried out according to the requirements of plant democracy, is not only a question of company responsibility, but, under socialism, society is involved as well. Official and societal involvements constitute a unit in the management of companies and the ensuring of this is primarily in the interest of society. By the societal aspect we mean the union which embraces the entire collective. The effective utilization of the aspect demands particular competence and preparedness. In the representative organs of the unions thousands of workers become acquainted with the methods of company management and leadership and they increasingly learn how to organize and supervise through social means the company collective's productiveness and other activities. The unions can only become schools of leadership, management and guidance through their participation in the organization and management of a company.

The movement activists and functionaries, trained in the unions' representative organs, are an indispensable reserve corps for economic management as well. A significant portion of our economic leaders has gained the organizational and political knowledge and experience necessary for leadership in trade-union work.

The functioning of the unions as organs of plant democracy is further cemented by the same unity of objectives and interests which link the socialist state and the companies and offices on the one hand and the company collectives and the unions representing them on the other hand.

The unions, as the class organizations of the working class, are able to bring into play the interests which are determined by public property, by keeping in mind the fundamental interests of the working class. The collectives they represent are directly and also indirectly interested in the growth and rational use of socialist property. The development of the various factors involved in the standard of living is after all to a decisive degree dependent upon the success of production. The socialist proprietor attitude is of course motivated and influenced by the socialist employee attitude on account of the union representing not only the long-term but also the daily interests of the working class. The unions are not only outside observers but they also participate as organs of plant democracy in the management of companies.

The unions' functioning on the basis of the recognition and understanding of the property and interest relationships of the working class in power is one of their most characteristic aspects in socialism. However, this cannot simply relegate to the background the historically evolved 'protection of interests' role of the unions. The unions have to function in such a way that their democratic rights and their protective role should never be at each other's expense but, rather, serve to reciprocate and enforce one another.

The functioning of the unions as organs of plant democracy is unavoidably necessary even from the standpoint of their role in the protection of interests. Under socialism the actual practice of protecting the workers' interests by the

unions is carried out through the latter's institutionalized participation, within the framework of plant democracy, in the organization and management of the company's work.

We have emphasized the inseparable nature of the unions' role in the protection of interests and their function as organs of plant democracy. Objectives and interests to be realized may as well not exist if the union cannot adequately utilize its possibilities, if it is not able to achieve, through the practice of its rights, the implementation of its views in company decisions and ruling. It is a relatively easy achievement to involve the unions in the decisions, rulings, etc. on the most varied of questions. However, constructive debates and differences of opinion generally start when the unions do not only participate but take an independent stand as well.

The functioning of the unions as organs ofiplant democracy is also inseparable from their educational role. The decisions reached with the participation of the unions' representative organs called for educational work from two aspects. One is that the union organs must develop their stand on various questions in consultation with the workers and on the basis of their opinion. This means an exchange of opinions and debates with the workers. But successful education of the workers can only occur if they feel that their views, suggestions and judgements are considered and mirrored in the joint decisions of the company and the unions.

The second aspect of the reason why educational work is indispensable is its task to acquaint the workers with the work ahead, gain their acceptance of the challenge and mobilize them.

We may conclude on the basis of all of this that in Hungary there is neither the need nor the desire for any separate organization to implement plant democracy. The task of implementing plant democracy is well taken care of by the union organs.

In Hungary it is along the lines detailed above that the workers, the working masses participate both in a direct way and indirectly – through their representative organizations, the unions – in the decisions, in the drawing up of company and social tasks and in the supervision of their execution.

We consider forums of direct democracy those programs, those possibilities in a plant or an office where the workers have a chance for mass participation and can make direct recommendations, state observations and have a say in the management of affairs. Such forums are the production councils, work conferences, union membership meetings, the conferences of union groups, the brigade discussions and other workers' meetings. These forums make it possible for every worker to participate in the decisions.

The indirect, representative forums of plant democracy are those organs, bodies and conferences which are attended by the workers' elected representatives or lower echelon leaders, shop managers who are directly in charge of the workers. Such are the elected directive organs of the unions, the labour

arbitration board, the labour court, the meeting of brigade leaders, the shop steward conferences, the technical conferences, etc.

The tasks and rights of the unions have increased recently under the reformed system of economic management.[9] In numerous instances, when the workers cannot have a direct say in the work or life of the company, it is the various elected bodies of the union which exercise the workers' decision-making rights (e.g., the companies' social, communal, welfare investments, the distribution of profits, the organization of labour, etc.). The members of these union bodies are elected by the union membership from among those workers who are well acquainted with the work and functional principles of the company.

The leading union bodies, on the basis of demands and needs, have developed the norms (fields of authority, organizational and political tasks) according to which they can implement the tasks assigned to them in the course of the reform of the economic mechanism.

The union is present and is making its influence felt whenever decisions are made concerning the company's objectives, work and the workers' living and working conditions.

One question which affects every worker of a company is the making of collective agreements in which the established rights and obligations of the company's director and of the company's union council, representing the workers, come into play. The collective agreement is also the classical example of plant democracy because it is borne out of an exchange of views between the economic management and the workers. It is a general experience that at the preparatory deliberations preceding the agreement, about 75–80 per cent of the company's workers participate and 18–22 per cent express their opinions. It is the task of the union organs to make sure that the collective agreement, which is the "constitution" of the company, unequivocally contain both the workers' and the company's obligations, rights and tasks.

The Hungarian unions, representing the totality of the labour force, participate in the planning of the national economy and in the determination of the tasks affecting society. Thus from the very outset they represent and reconcile the interests of the employees, which vary by sector and trade, with the interests and aspirations of society as a whole. However, their main intention is to develop plant or company union activities, educate the workers and protect the employees' interests. In Hungary the possibilities have never been greater nor

[9] As is known, a reform of the economic mechanism and economic management was implemented in Hungary beginning on January 1st, 1968. This in part had meant that the companies were granted greater autonomy in the interest of strengthening the planned economy and in order to better serve the existing requirements. In this way we wanted to implement the principle that decisions should be made where the appropriate level of information is available, that company managers should be responsible for and have a stake in the matters which they have the right to decide upon. The achievement of harmony between the various spheres (the informational, the decision-making, the responsible and the interest) meant the enrichment of the content of democracy at the place of work and the perfection of its form.

conditions more favourable for the development of the union movement and its activities and for the successful work of leading organs and functionaries than those which have developed during the recent past as a result of the Party's correct political line. The union movement has gained possibilities which are accompanied by great responsibility, their field of authority has expanded and the rights of the unions have been broadened and precisely defined.

The growth of company autonomy, the more effective protection of the workers' interests and the accompanying demand for legal guarantees have made the further expansion of union rights both necessary and timely. Thus at the present time the unions have the following concrete and legal rights over and above their usual rights:

The implementation of *the right to be heard* means that, for example, if the Council of Ministers is discussing new legislation concerning the living and working conditions of working people, they are obligated to listen to the opinion of the presidium of the National Council of Trade Unions. It merits mention that it is on the basis of the implementation of this right that regular meetings have come about between the Council of Ministers and the presidium of the National Council of Trade Unions, at which they have exchanged views on the above-mentioned type of problems and other national questions.

The *right to agreement* and *to make joint decisions* can be implemented on two, the ministerial and the company, levels. The minister can only decide upon questions concerning the workers' living and working conditions once he has reached an agreement with the union concerned. There are instances when a minister acts on a problem that is not directly within his own sphere but on the level of the national economy. When a regulation has to be made which concerns the workers' living and working conditions and it falls within the jurisdiction of the Minister of Labour, or of Finance, or of Health, the ministerial decree may only be issued once the agreement of the National Council of Trade Unions has been gained.

The agreement of the company organ of the union is necessary for the drawing up of the company labour protection regulations, for the arrangements of the operational and organizational regulations concerning work status, the wages affecting the company or some larger entity, the determination of regulations concerning social or cultural benefits, as well as the ordering of general question concerning working conditions not dealt with in the collective agreement.

In matters jointly decided upon, arrangements are made in the name of the company's economic management and of the company union organ, and both are responsible for the implementation. The most characteristic form of joint decisions is the collective agreement.

The unions' *right to express opinions* means that even if the questions to be dealt with belong to the jurisdiction of the state or company organs, they are nevertheless obligated, before concluding a decision, to inform the unions and request their opinion. That is, although the economic managers have the right to decide upon matters within their jurisdiction, the law obligates them to first

discuss the matters with the workers' representatives, with the union, listen to their opinion concerning the matter and only make their decision after having acquainted themselves with these views. The objective of this method is to increase the independence and responsibility of the economic managers and at the same time give the unions an opportunity for more effective and critical supervision of the individual decisions. A further aspect of this right is that the respective union bodies must be consulted in the case of economic managers being assigned, dismissed or when their work is reviewed.

The unions' *right of inspection* extends to all questions which touch upon the workers' interests. It is their right and obligation to supervise adherence to the laws, regulations and any collective agreements connected with living and working conditions. They are entitled to ask for information from state organs or from companies and conduct on-the-spot investigations. The economic managers are obligated to give the necessary information and to give the documents necessary for the investigation over to the unions. In so far as the unions note errors in the course of the investigation, they bring them to the attention of the responsible persons and decide upon a deadline for the clearing up of the irregularities.

The unions have *the right of objection or veto* and may use it whenever a company violates the regulations outlined in a law or decree, the collective agreements or socialist norms and morals. Vetoed measures cannot be extended until the appropriate higher organs have adopted a position or decided on the question. The political significance of this right is very great from the point of view of solving conflicts of interest and of protecting the workers' rights.

On the basis of *the right to participate and to have representation in debates on labour affairs* the union organs are present at labour arbitration committees, the president and vice presidents of which are appointed in agreement with union organs, and half the members of which are delegated by the unions.

The right of the unions to independent regulations and decisions refers to questions under their jurisdiction. Thus, for example, the National Council of Trade Unions deals with work safety and workers' health protection as well as tasks involved with social security. The company union organs themselves decide on ways of using the funds set aside for social and cultural purposes as established in the collective agreement. Of course, they request the opinions of the economic managers before making their decision.

The enforcement of the rights is determined according to levels, depending on whether it is a company or national question (in the latter case the whole of the working class may be affected). Primarily only those questions which affect all the workers fall under the jurisdiction of the National Council of Trade Unions; under the jurisdiction of the individual unions' central leadership are matters related to the particular branch-sector; the County Council deals with matters affecting the county, while the company, office and institute unions' organs are responsible for matters affecting the workers of the respective place of work.

The rights of the Hungarian unions and the possibilities they thus possess are

on such a broad scale that practically everything that has to do with the living and working conditions of the people, with the protection of their legal rights comes under their authority and responsible activities. It is for this reason that the rights of the unions are the rights of the entire working class, of all workers living off wages and salaries, regardless of whether or not they are actually union members.

However, it is a basic requirement that the union organs, operating on different levels, take into consideration the opinions of the concerned strata and collectives and give them representation in the spirit of the laws.

In connection with the practice of the rights and their implementation we must further mention that the state guarantees legal protection for elected union officials. Thus, for example, the economic managers cannot fire union officials. The consent of the higher union organ is necessary if the issue comes up concerning the transfer or dismissal of an elected official. This protection gives considerable security since it often occurs that officials who are defending the workers' legal rights get into conflicts with management.

III. THE PROTECTION OF INTERESTS AND EDUCATION

Today, the unions have to attend to the function of the protection of interests under complicated circumstances. In our society both the Party and the state consider it to be its prime objective to fulfill the needs of the population, which, of course, involves the organized workers, and the unions are in a position of having to protect the workers' interest under such a socio-political system which basically is already concerned with that task. This gives a unique character to the unions' activities in that field.

The conditions necessary for this work are further complicated by the fact that within the basic agreement of interests there may sometimes occur a conflict between the political, economic and other considerations. Likewise, there may be a divergence in the interests of various classes, strata and groups which may well pose equally just and realizable demands. These can only be resolved through an understanding of priorities on the basis of a principled compromise. The "protection of interests" activity of the unions is further made difficult by the fact that the individuals', the groups' and the strata's consciousness of their interests does not mirror totally their objective social interests. Therefore, the unions' activities in that field also necessitate the continuous and constant moulding of the consciousness of interests on a mass scale. In the exercise of this activity the unions protect the interests of individuals or groups who have been in some way wronged, be it either in their capacity as producers or consumers or as members of the public. The protection of interests does not only mean the righting of wrongs, however, its other aspect is the correct delineation of the problem and the involvement of the entire membership in its solution.

The primary and basic task of the unions is the protection of the interests of all workers living off wages and salaries, the protection of the people's common

interests and the assistance of the construction of a socialist society. The "protection of interests" role of the unions is an activity affecting all of society even if it is only on a company level and is concerned with the concrete violation of the rights of individuals and collectives.

We must emphasize that although the unions are the organizations of all those living off wages and salaries, basically and essentially they are the organizations of the working class. With the means at their disposal they assist in the realization of the goals of the working class, they attend to the protection and representation of the interests of the working class and paralleling this they organize and educate the working class in the first place. Primarily it is the implementation of these responsibilities which unifies the entire trade-union movement without regard for whatever stratum of the workers is defended and represented by any one union. The class interests and objectives of the working class are in harmony with the interests of all working people. Therefore, the unions, as the organizations of the working class, assist in strengthening the people's national unity and in the gradual involvement of all the workers in the construction of socialism.

At the same time, the fact that the unions are the organizations of all those living off wages and salaries means that besides being unified, the union movement is also diverse. The task of the union movement is to expose and synthesize the various interests in the course of carrying out its functions of protection and education.

What kinds of conflicts of interest are there? We have recognized with the introduction of the new economic mechanism that the interests of companies belonging to certain industrial branch unions may sharply diverge. Even in companies belonging to one or another union it is possible that at one company mainly white collar workers are employed while at the other blue collar workers are the majority. In such circumstances the given union has to represent the interests of both the intellectual and physical workers and at the same time further the interests of the national economy. The Printers', Paper-industry and Newspaper Workers' Union has such a task for example, since the interests of the workers of the publishing houses do not coincide with the interests of the printers in every instance. The union, as representative of all those living off wages and salaries, has to bring the different interests into harmony.

From this point of view, particular regard has to be paid to the unions dealing with intellectuals. For example, the protection and representation of the teachers' interests and their continuing education is a basic task for the entire union movement because the social character of the next generation depends to a large extent on their work. Particular regard must be paid under the present circumstances to the interests of the workers in the Public Servants' Union who in the main cannot be ranked among the members of the working class. What is the underlying reason for this deferential treatment? It is that within the Public Servants' Union are the workers of the state apparatus, those who put into practice the state power of the working class. The protection of the public servants' interests and the improvement of the work of those working in the state

apparatus are fundamentally important tasks from the point of view of the strengthening of the socialist state as well. The union movement has a dual responsibility here. On the one hand, it must combat bureaucracy in the state apparatus; it must act whenever this harms the workers' interests. But on the other hand, it must struggle to gain respect for the work of those who have been employed in the state apparatus for years or decades and have served the policies of the proletarian state well and with honour.

If we consider the interests of the members of certain unions and their particular tasks, we can see that certain tasks can only be solved through the cooperation of all the unions. For example, it would not be correct to make the Doctors' and Health Workers' Union solely responsible for the protection of every worker's health. Likewise, we cannot make the Commercial, Financial and Catering Trade Workers' Union solely responsible for supervising the development of prices or commercial activities, because this is a task for all unions and the solutions may, in given situations, conflict with the narrow interest of the given union's members (for example, certain stores being open on Sundays) while it is in the interest of all other workers.

Sándor Gáspár, the Secretary General of the National Council of Trade Unions, wrote the following on the difficulties of solving conflicts of interest: "It is not only the interests within the working class, between the various strata of the toilers, that is under discussion, but it is the coordination of interests on the various levels, between the interests of the workers and the social interests represented by the economic and state organs. The causes of difference in interests may be both objective and subjective. The establishment of harmony is easier when the difference derives from subjective causes, for legal means afford the possibilities of coordinating the interests rapidly, i.e. of the enforcement of real, objective interests against the supposed "subjective" interests. Coordination of interests causes a greater worry, however, when the case is a conflict of objective interest, of individual and enterprise or people's economy [i.e. national economy] interests. In such a case a very thorough consideration of coordinating the interests is necessary so that with the right decision an appropriate positive effect can be attained, in the interest of both our social development and the welfare of the individual."[10]

From all this it follows that under socialism the social role of the unions remains the same, that is, they protect and represent the workers' interests. This activity, however, has gone through a considerable development:

– under socialism, the serving of the interests of the workers objectively gives grounds for the further involvement of society in defining the workers' economic, financial, social and cultural needs;

– the protection and strengthening of the workers' power becomes an organic part of the "protection of interests" activity;

[10] S. Gáspár: *Role of the Hungarian Trade Unions in the Construction of Socialism.* Budapest, 1971, p. 52.

– the protection of interests is ensured by the unions primarily by protecting the interests of a class, that is, conducting this function on a class level; this, however, does not mean excluding such basic union activities as bringing the various individual, group and social interests into harmony;

– the unions participate in the drawing up of the state's tasks, in the working out of its economic, social and cultural policies and assist in their implementation;

– of course, the protection of the national interest continues to be an organic part of the unions' protection activity, which obviously can be carried out under more favourable conditions, given the social and political relations of socialism, than under capitalism.

The methods and means employed by the unions in the protection of interests show significant changes compared to capitalist circumstances. This appears in a double aspect, namely, the exercise of protection of rights is done partly by resorting to the rights guaranteed by law and partly through an educational and mobilizing endeavour. Whereas under capitalism, it is strikes, demonstrations and other demonstrative manifestations of the power relationship of the classes that decide the fate of the workers' interests and demands, under socialism it is the effectiveness of the unions' protective functions and the permanent and broadening legal rights. With these, the unions have at their disposal sufficient means for the protection of the workers' interests, making strikes unnecessary.

In the connection between the unions and the socialist state the practical protection and representation of interests are realized on four levels. These four levels give the union ample opportunities to protect the workers' interests and to create the best alignment of the individual, trade, industrial-branch and social interests. The regulation of problems connected with living and working conditions is developed in a special way on the four levels.

1. The highest level is between the National Council of Trade Unions and the Council of Ministers or some other organ with a national scope of authority. At this level, problems which are the most general, which affect everyone in the nation are dealt with. It is at this level that the coordination and representation of matters of national significance are implemented, that the opinions concerning the yearly or many years' economic plans are stated and that the most comprehensive ordering of labour legislation, social security, health protection, labour safety, wages, etc. take place.

It is a time honoured method that the leaders of the government, the Prime Minister and his deputies meet every six months or, if necessary, more often with the leaders of the National Council of Trade Unions and its Secretariat members for discussions related to their work, to discuss the most essential problems of the upcoming period. There is not only a mutual orientation but also, on the part of the unions, an assessment of the problems ahead, of the views and suggestions and criticism of the most general errors in practice as well as representation of the most essential questions affecting the various strata or workers. This is a useful way to deal with each conflict of interest, to find solutions for them, to recognize the signs of tension and prepare the appropriate measures in time.

2. The next level is that of the contact between the industrial branches'–sectors' ministers and the secretaries or presidiums of the respective unions. Most regulations concerning an industrial branch or sector are made on the basis of agreement. The essence of the connection between a minister and the Secretary General, between a ministry and the Presidium is that the unions regularly participate in the initial drawing up of planned measures. The relationship of the unions and the ministries is outlined in detail and in writing in most industrial branches–sectors. This has resulted in the clarification of the laws and regulations in effect and of the methods of cooperation for both.

3. The area level connections take place between the county councils of unions and the counties' state administrative organs. The unions deal, according to the peculiarities of the administrative area, with the county plans for the communal, social and cultural provisions, with the services affecting the workers' living and working conditions, with public transport, goods available and employment. The solution of problems, the solution of any conflict of interest which may arise, is more complicated here because of the diversity of factors arising from the different developments.

4. The fourth level is the place of work, the level of the basic, local organ where the economic managers and union committees state their mutual approval in the form of a collective agreement. From the point of view of weighing interests and bringing them into harmony, the plant or place of work level is the most direct and its everyday effect is felt by the workers directly.

The state-owned enterprise is not an organ of state power, or of state administration but rather, it is an economic, productive unit of the state. Therefore, both its legal status and the unions' rights here are different from those in the case of the organs of the state administration. (These rights were dealt with in detail in the second section.)

It is on these four levels that the unions have the opportunity to unify interests and to find the best solutions for the conflicts of interests. The four levels institutionally ensure that the workers' opinions, problems, worries and their contributions gain expression, through the unions' representation of their interests, in the national and local decisions, in public affairs and in profitable production. It is clear on the basis of the above that under socialism the unions dispense with the use of several means and methods of struggle which under capitalism are used by unions today (e. g. strikes, demonstrations, list of demands, etc.). Strikes and demonstrations are the militant weapons of irreconcilable class antagonisms and the working class under capitalism uses them only as a last resort because they mean a great trial of strength and often loss of income and deprivation.

Under socialism, although not forbidden by law, the unions do not organize strikes, because through their right of representation they can resolve all non-irreconcilable contradictions. It is possible even under socialism, particularly on the company level, that differences of views become so sharp that a direct effort at reconciliation does not bring satisfactory results. But through the

cooperation of the higher state and union organs even these contradictions can be resolved. The teachings of Lenin are valid to this day: "In cases where wrong actions of business organizations, the backwardness of certain sections of workers, the provocations of counter-revolutionary elements or, lastly, lack of foresight on the part of the trade union organizations themselves lead to open disputes in the form of strikes in state enterprises, and so forth, the task of the trade unions is to bring about the speediest settlement of the dispute by taking measures in conformity with the general nature of trade union activities, that is by taking steps to remove the real injustices and irregularities and to satisfy the lawful and practicable demands of the masses, by exercising political influence on the masses, and so forth."[11]

It is only natural that under socialism the unions, when they represent and protect the workers' interests, employ means and methods appropriate to the objective situation in their relationship with the state.

It may be seen from the above that the unions, as participants in the workers' power, are equal partners with the state organs; they cooperate for the common goal, but carry out their activities, laden with responsibilities, separately. The unions assist, through social means, the state of the working class while at the same time they make demands of it and exercise social supervision over its functions in the interest of the workers, primarily to realize the workers' participation in the decision-making process on an ever higher level.

The workers' feeling or consciousness of being the owners of the means of production is a very important incentive at the plant or company level, but the workers, particularly under socialism, must look beyond the factory as their interests are greater. It is the workers together who create material goods so they must participate on a national level in the decisions concerning production and distribution as well as in the supervision of how the decisions are carried out.

The Hungarian unions are autonomous organizations. This means that neither the state, nor the Party can make decisions for the unions. But they are not independent of the Party and they recognize its leadership role. The unions may criticize the government's activities. But they must not only and not primarily criticize but, rather, take part in the decisions with a feeling of responsibility for the whole of society.

The Hungarian unions consider the complete construction of socialism in Hungary to be a basic objective and therefore, as mentioned, they recognize the leading role of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and its theoretical and political guidance. But the Party demands that the unions participate in the formation of its policies. The Hungarian unions – through their character, extended apparatus and extended network of social activists – are suitably equipped to understand even the details of the views, needs and objective circumstances of organized labour through direct experience, to pass on views

[11] V.I. Lenin: *Selected Works*. Vol. 3, p. 654. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1967.

and information to the decision-making bodies and to participate in making those decisions.

Besides this, the unions are becoming increasingly suitable for influencing the views and needs of workers according to realities and developments, to scientifically formulate and reconcile the various individual and group interests from the employees' side and then strengthen them through the force of the movement. They can chiefly implement this possibility, through the peculiarities of their role and functions, in the field of economic policy. Therefore it is a fundamental responsibility of the unions, as the employees' organ for the protection of their interests, to participate in the drawing up of the Party's economic policy.

This is particularly valid for such areas of economic policy which affect the standard of living, and within that, the questions of wages, staff management, social policies, housing, consumer price policies, etc. Our unions strive for agreement between the economic considerations and the employees' interests in all of these areas. The unions actively assist in the implementation of the formulated economic policies with every means at their disposal but they also move into action should their experiences indicate that there are incorrect details in the economic objectives included within the Party's system of economic policy. And finally the unions act decisively if they experience that some organ wants to or does distort the Party's economic policy.

The rapid development of the economy in Hungary, which the unions assist with labour drives, socialist competitions and with the organization of the socialist brigade movement, is partly the result of the protection of the workers' interests. Another result, issuing from the previous one, is the steady and rapid growth of the workers' and employees' standard of living.[12]

Taking the 1950 levels as 100, by 1970 national income had increased to 300, industrial production to 521 and agricultural production to 138.

In 1970, 1,250,000 people participated in the socialist brigade movement, the essence of which is well expressed by the movement's slogan: "Live, work and study in a socialist way".

In 1969 the real wages of workers and employees were 90 per cent greater than in 1950. The per capita real income had risen by two and a half times.

It is impossible even to list all those achievements which the workers have obtained as a result of the unions' "protection of interest" activities in the areas of consumerism, social benefits, vacations, social security, labour safety, health protection, improvements in transportation and housing construction.

The agitational, propaganda, cultural and sport activities of the unions are part of their educational role. These activities contribute a great deal toward having the members recognize and support the main political and economic objectives. This is one of the main areas of union work and, faithful to tradition, the unions

[12] The source for the following data are the *Statisztikai Évkönyv* (Statistical yearbook) for 1970. Budapest, 1971, p. 573; and *A Magyar Szakszervezetek XXII. Kongresszusa ...*

conduct a variety of activities in this field. It is worthwhile to note the 1970 data. In that year 575,000 union activists and members gained training in the unions' education programs. The total number of copies of union papers and periodicals was 1,750,000 including that of *Népszava* (the central daily of the unions) which was 300,000. The union publishers put out 249 works in 7,200,000 copies. The Hungarian unions have 3,958 independent libraries which have some 7 million volumes in all and in that year 642,000 readers borrowed 11.3 million books. Within the framework of the unions 2,022 artistic groups are active with a total of 40,000 members. In 1970 the unions organized 50,398 educational programs which were attended by 2,262,000 people, mainly physical labourers. Three hundred community centres are handled by the unions and there are 25,000 plant clubs and cultural halls. There are 175,000 people enjoying sports in 1,613 union sport clubs.

All this serves the objective which is for the membership of Hungarian unions to be made up of cultured, learned and versatile people. The achievements of the unions are tremendous in this field and so are the tasks. After all, under socialism, not only the consistent growth of their material wealth but their intellectual development and enrichment are also characteristic of the workers.

IV. THE PRINCIPLES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS OF THE HUNGARIAN TRADE UNIONS

In their international connections, the Hungarian unions, being faithful to the principle of proletarian internationalism, start from those historical experiences which are proved by the centuries-old struggles of the workers of the world: the workers of the world and their unions can successfully protect their interests and realize their ideas of social progress through proletarian solidarity and with organization and unity.

In the development of their international connections, the Hungarian unions started out with the understanding that throughout the world the basic interests and objectives of the working class are one and indivisible. Every union, be it in a small or a large country, has a common responsibility and task in the struggle to, first of all, guarantee peace, to liquidate imperialism and every form of colonialism, to preserve democratic and social achievements and to liberate the workers of the world. This principle is emphasized by the resolution of the 22nd Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions which stated that "the Hungarian Trade Unions, true to their internationalist traditions, are supporters and active participants in the struggle that is being waged by the workers against imperialism and exploitation, for the independence and freedom of peoples, for peace and social progress. In our international activities we build our connections with our fraternal unions in the service of these objectives and we reinforce our solidarity with the class struggle of our brother and sister workers. We wish to aid the

workers' and the unions' anti-imperialist unity of action by basing ourselves on the fundamental unity of interests which exists among the workers of the world and on the movement toward unity within the international union movement which is developing upon the recognition of this".[13]

Before 1945, the Hungarian unions only had contact with the unions of a few countries, primarily with those of the neighbouring nations, but at present they have regular contacts of various kinds with the union movements of ninety-two countries. These connections are extremely diverse, starting with mutual information and delegation exchanges to reciprocal solidarity and participation in joint international moves. These contacts are mainly on a national level, primarily it is the National Council of Trade Unions that is involved, but besides this, individual unions and area organizations maintain contacts as well. In addition to bilateral contacts with the unions of other countries, the Hungarian unions actively participate in the various international organizations. Of these, the World Federation of Trade Unions, of which the Hungarian unions are members, must be mentioned in the first place. The individual unions participate in the international federations of trade unions and they are members of UN organizations such as, for example, the International Labour Organization and UNESCO. They consider this work to be of equal significance to their contacts with the unions of other nations.

The Hungarian unions believe their work in the World Federation of Trade Unions to be particularly important because they consider it to be an organization which embodies the unity of the workers of the world, of workers' solidarity, and, therefore, they actively support every initiative of that organization and work toward the realization of its objectives.

The content of the international contacts of the Hungarian unions is determined by other factors in addition to the fundamental ideological and political ones. Such is the development of the international situation which always affects the contact with other countries' unions. Such factors are the struggle for national independence and its solidification, and the expression of solidarity toward the people and workers fighting for their freedom. Such a factor is the division of the international trade-union movement which leads us to try with all our strength to achieve unity of action between the various tendencies. And last but not least, such a factor is the necessity to strengthen the unity that exists between the socialist nations of the world and their union movements.

From the seizure of power to the present day, these factors, together with their changing contents, have always been influential in their totality, and they demand from the Hungarian union movement the acceptance of those responsibilities whose realization will assist the working class and all workers in the class struggle waged on an international scale.

In their international role, the Hungarian unions consider their foremost and fundamental task to be the protection of peace. They do not regard this simply as

[13] *A Magyar Szakszervezetek XXII. Kongresszusa ...*

a political undertaking but, rather, as one of the most noble "protection of interests" responsibilities of unions. After all, armament places the heaviest of burdens on the workers of the world, not to mention the destruction of war. It follows from this that the Hungarian unions support in every way they can the principle and policies of peaceful coexistence between countries with different social systems because this makes it possible to improve international union contacts, to approach union unity and its future realization and to support the struggle for freedom.

What can the Hungarian unions do in the interest of this? It is not just with declarations that they support the struggle for peace but also by increasing the strength of the Hungarian People's Republic by carrying out the economic, political, social and cultural tasks well. They well know that the strengthening of a socialist state serves the cause of peace.

Primarily it is their contacts with the unions of the socialist countries that the Hungarian unions are extending and developing. One reason for this is that we have recognized the fact that the organized workers of the socialist countries are filling an increasingly decisive role in the international union movement. On various questions the taking of a joint stand by the unions of the socialist countries is of decisive significance. It is for this reason that the Hungarian unions consider solidarity with the unions and workers of every socialist nation, and with the Soviet Union in particular, to be a fundamental responsibility. It is for this reason that they work together in the construction of socialism and communism, in the struggle against imperialism and in guaranteeing peace and social progress for mankind.

The Hungarian unions consider sound cooperation between the unions of the socialist countries to be the basis, the prerequisite for their international activity. In addition to the regular and increasing exchanges, a new task in these contacts is the increasing participation within the socialist integrated organizations, primarily in the Council of Mutual Economic Aid, which is a prerequisite for the development of union work in the socialist world.

The Hungarian unions consider it to be of particular importance to develop increasingly closer contact with the unions of the developing nations as well as with those fighting against oppression. This is particularly significant because in the majority of these countries the rapidly growing unions constitute one of the decisive social forces and in places even the only organization of the working class that is capable, to a large degree, of determining their path of further progress. The Hungarian unions consider it to be their internationalist duty to render moral, political and material support to the unions of the recently liberated nations so that they may become stronger.

The Hungarian unions pay particular attention to their European contacts also on account of their geographical and social positions. They fully support the holding of the European security conferences and, with an understanding of the common interests and responsibilities of the workers, they have always supported the idea of convening the European Trade Union Conference. They are doing

everything in the interest of such a conference taking place to reinforce the already existing contacts. It is the opinion of the Hungarian unions that during the last few years, in contradiction with the relations of the preceding cold-war era, the opportunity has developed for a movement toward unity in the international union movement in the ranks of the unions which represent different tendencies. The Hungarian unions exert every effort in the interest of the realization of that unity, even if there are still considerable obstacles to be overcome.

The Hungarian unions believe that workers throughout the world, although they may belong to different international union centres, strongly feel the need, in the interest of their protection, for a cooperation and unity that is greater than at present. We can see that there is a diminishing number of those union leaders in the capitalist countries who even today are expanding the cold-war line and stubbornly forbid contact with the unions of the socialist countries. As far as the contacts with unions belonging to other international centres are concerned, the Hungarian unions want to develop them on the principles of mutual respect for each other's opinions, non-interference in internal affairs and the seeking of points of agreement, of unity on which to base their concrete cooperation.

The Hungarian unions are of the opinion that in the contact among the unions it is not diplomacy that is needed but rather frank, open discussion of the problems and an understanding with open criticism when need be. It is for this reason that the Hungarian unions do not wish to develop contacts with those who slander the unions of the socialist countries.

Under the present circumstances, in their contacts with capitalist countries, the Hungarian unions stand by the resolution of their 22nd Congress which states that "At all times it is the idea of workers' solidarity and joint class interests which should give content to the international contact of the unions. Attentiveness to one another's affairs, seeking understanding, steadfast representation of our internationalist class stand and the attitude of workers, these are things which should characterize our exchanges and give them their essence."[14]

Under the present circumstances, the Hungarian unions have posed new demands as regards the development of their contacts with the unions of the capitalist countries. Sándor Gáspár, the Secretary General of the National Council of Trade Unions, stated them as follows:

" ... we consider it necessary and actual to concentrate our energy on the European trade union movement, within it on the trade union movements of such countries with whom – owing to our historical traditions, social, political, economic and cultural relations – the development of cooperation is a realistic proposition;

– we intend for the sake of achieving unity of action of the trade unions to assist in regional collaboration, among others on a European plane, on the plane of the Danubian States and on the level of certain economic integration;

[14] *A Magyar Szakszervezetek XXII. Kongresszusa ...*, p. 327.

– we wish to attain that relations of the Hungarian organized workers be strengthened with the workers of the European capitalist countries – by workers' tourism, in cultural, sport and other activities;

– on the exchange of trade union delegations a more thorough preparatory activity is necessary so that the utilization of our financial resources should bring forth better results. For this reason we consider it necessary that the exchange of information and orientation between our unions should be expanded."[15]

The broad international involvement of the Hungarian unions is an organic aspect of their work. Every experience of our history has taught them to value international solidarity. They know that they are responsible for their work not only to the Hungarian working class, not only to the Hungarian workers, but also to the entire international working class and therefore the Hungarian trade unions will continue striving to serve with honour the needs of their own working class, those of the international working class as well as of the international trade union movement.

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Since the writing of the above chapter, a number of further events have enriched the life of the Hungarian trade-union movement.

The most outstanding among them was the 11th Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, held in March 1975. Analysing the development of our society, it concluded that the Hungarian People's Republic is advancing victoriously along the path of building socialism and that the next immediate task is the establishment of a developed socialist social order. In the interest of this goal, it worked out the program for the next fifteen to twenty years; upon the completion of this Hungary will become a developed socialist society. In order to achieve this, there is a concerted need for increasing productivity on the part of the working people, for stepping up social growth, for developing the national economy, for increasing the living standard, all in the interest of strengthening the socialist social relationships.

Preceded by the individual (branch) union congresses, the 23rd Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions was convened in December 1975. It analysed the work of the trade unions carried out since the previous congress as well as worked out the cardinal tasks of the coming five years.

The report that was taken before the Congress stated that "during the period under review the trade unions' initiative, their independent activity and cooperation in the posing of social questions and in the decisions and solutions concerning these, have been on the upswing and have steadily become strengthened. In the course of carrying out their tasks, they have paid attention to social and economic processes, always signalling their observations and suggestions which they have sought to put into practice. They have all developed closer

[15] S. Gáspár: *Role of the Hungarian Trade Unions in the Construction of Socialism.*

and better cooperation with other official bodies, from the council of Ministers right to the enterprises. Above all, their greatest efforts have been exerted in the areas involving the living and working circumstances of the workers, of the working-class.

The mass contacts of the trade-union movement have grown greater. Its unity with the working masses has become even more solid. Its ability to feel, represent and protect the rightful needs of the working class and of the other working strata has grown steadily. The trade unions have become much more adapt at using the rights that have been entrusted to them. As a result of this, the social significance of trade union work has grown, as has the prestige and influence of the unions among the working masses and among the economic leaders of the nation."[16]

The trade unions' activity has contributed to the successful completion and overfulfillment of Hungary's Fourth Five Year Plan. In the course of the plan national income increased by 35 per cent, real income by 16 per cent for every working person; the fourty-four hour working week was realized and the various social benefits grew rapidly. Social security expenditures per working person grew from 6,180 *forints* in 1970 to 9,686 *forints* in 1974. During the period under review, 3.9 million people enjoyed subsidized holidays as provided by their places of work and their unions. The educational work of the trade unions also increased. The daily newspaper of the trade unions, *Népszava,* has a run of 300,000 copies a day and the publishing house of the trade unions brought out 980 works in altogether 24 million copies. Other types of educational work have also grown: 135,000 trade-union members took part every year in the various courses offered. Membership in the unions has also grown, showing a 460,000 strong increase over the 1970 membership total, reaching the 3,957,000 mark by the end of 1975. This means that 94.6 per cent of the working people are organized.

We could continue for pages, detailing the successes, but perhaps these few figures were enough to acquaint the reader with the strength of the trade-union movement and its role in the Hungarian People's Republic.

The 23rd Congress of the Trade Unions adopted a resolution which summarizes the most important tasks facing the trade-union movement. Above all, it emphasizes that it is in full agreement with the resolutions of the 11th Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and that it desires to actively participate in their fulfillment. "The 11th Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party has taken on the task of constructing the developed socialist society in Hungary. The trade unions regard this as a program which excellently expresses the goals of the working class, the interests, aims and desires of all the people living off wages and salaries and they serve the further elevation of the whole of the Hungarian people. It is most understandable why our working masses are enthusiastic about this program. The trade-union movement takes

[16] *A Magyar Szakszervezetek XXIII. Kongresszusa* (The 23rd Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions). Táncsics Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1976, p. 390.

these objectives as its own and wishes to assist in their realization with all its might."[17]

The trade-union Congress reaffirms in its resolution that it accepts the leading role of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, emphasizing that the established practice has made unequivocal the role and social weight of the trade unions and their relationship to the socialist state, and has increased their responsibility in the solution of the tasks of society. The trade unions assist with all of their might in strengthening the workers' power both politically and economically and at the same time they also pose demands on and supervise the work of the state apparatus. The growth of the economy and the increasing of production is the only basis for a rise in the living standard. For this reason the trade unions must participate in the planning of the production processes, assist in the rational organization of labour and mobilize the working masses to fulfill the production tasks.

The Congress emphasized in its resolution that the unions' activities in protecting and representing the workers' interests must go hand in hand with the promotion of society's overall interests. This necessitates the consideration of enterprise, collective and individual interests, the exercise of due regard and care for the proper living and working conditions of the working people, and the representation and protection of their lawful rights. The Congress called upon the trade unions to be forthright and more independent in carrying out their above functions. Educational work must permeate the whole of the unions' activities through which they must mould the people's consciousness, spread the socialist lifestyle, arouse the workers' desire for education and culture, and elevate the general cultural level of their members.

Among the tasks facing the trade-union movement the Congress paid special attention to the question of the extension of plant democracy at the places of work. The local organs of the trade unions are responsible for the functioning of the direct and the indirect forums and the everyday practice of democracy and they also ensure the workers' participation in the running of the enterprise and their social oversight of the management's work. In the interest of an even better performance of this responsibility the Congress suggested to the government that the unions' legally defined rights be extended and with this the government agreed. Accordingly, since 1976 the trade-union shop stewards' consent is required when it comes to increasing the workers' salaries and the distribution of premiums and awards. With this move, not only the role and prestige of the shop stewards have increased significantly, but it is also an important aspect of the development of trade-union democracy. In line with the principles of workers' democracy, the elected leading bodies are primarily responsible and must regularly report to the membership concerning their activities. Paying special attention to the relationship between the leaders and the membership, the Congress stated that "the leading bodies of the trade unions must improve their

[17] Op. cit., p. 325.

style of work and establish even closer links with the workers they represent. There must be regular meetings between shop stewards and delegates. The elected leading bodies must develop and maintain regular and planned contact with the shop stewards and assist the latter in the exercise of their rights and authority. The shop stewards are the ones who most directly sense the members' interests, opinions, endeavours and political mood. Before all essential decisions and the taking of a position, meetings must be held in order to hear the members' opinions and if there is no possibility for such a meeting being convened, then it must be done through the shop stewards and the delegates."[18]

Finally, the 23rd Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions thoroughly analysed the development of the trade unions' international contacts. The resolution of the Congress stated that "Hungarian trade unions, on the basis of the mutual interests of the international working class, are supporters and active participants of the struggle that the workers of the world are engaged in against imperialism and exploitation, for social progress, socialism, better living and working conditions, democratic and trade-union basic freedoms, independence, security and peace.

We are in solidarity with our class brethren and we support all initiatives that serve the common cause of the workers. Our international activities are carried out in the spirit of proletarian internationalism, in the interest of strengthening cooperation and unity in the relationship between the workers and their trade unions."[19]

Above all, the links with the socialist countries' trade unions must be further strengthened. Besides this, the ties with the trade unions in the developing countries must also be strengthened. They must be given moral, political and material assistance in their struggle against neo-colonialism, for national independence and for trade-union rights. The Hungarian trade unions continue in their endeavour to bring about stronger ties with the trade unions of the developed capitalist countries, primarily with those of the European ones. And finally, the Congress emphasized that the Hungarian trade unions consider as their own the objectives of the World Federation of Trade Unions and, as active participants in the formulation of its political line, assist it with all of their might in the realization of its tasks.

[18] Op. cit., pp. 338–339.
[19] Op. cit., p. 342.

APPENDIX

HUNGARIAN POLITICIANS MENTIONED IN THE STUDIES

ÁGOSTON, PÉTER (1874–1925) jurist, social-democrat politician. A vice-commissar during the Hungarian Republic of Councils. After its overthrow he was sentenced to death but due to an exchange of prisoners he went to Soviet Russia. From there he went to England and later lived in France. He did not take part in the labour movement during his emigré period.

ALPÁRI, GYULA (1882–1944) social-democrat, later communist journalist. Before and during the First World War one of the leaders of the left-wing social-democrat opposition. Early in 1919 entered the Hungarian Party of Communists. In 1921 became editor of the official paper of the Communist International. Arrested by the Gestapo in 1940 in France and taken to a concentration camp. As he refused to write a falsified history of the International, he was shot.

ANDRÁSSY, GYULA, Count (1823–1890) bourgeois politician. Prime Minister 1867–1871; Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy 1871–1879.

ANDRÁSSY, GYULA, Count (1860–1929) bourgeois politician. Minister of the Interior between 1906 and 1910 in the so-called "national coalition" government. Under his direction the authorities resorted to terror to retard the labour movement.

APRÓ, ANTAL (1913–) leading communist politician. One of the leaders of the left-wing opposition in the trade unions during the 1930's. An organizer and participant of the armed resistance during the German occupation of the country. From 1948 to 1951 the general secretary of the National Council of Trade Unions, later Minister in charge of the construction material industries. From 1953 to 1971 a Deputy Prime Minister, then First Deputy to the President of the Council of Ministers and since 1971 the President of the Parliament.

BAJCSY-ZSILINSZKY, ENDRE (earlier ZSILINSZKY) (1886–1944) bourgeois politician. Belonged to the leading group of the counter-revolution in the early 1920's. Became the leading personality of the bourgeois wing of the resistance movement during the summer and autumn of 1944 and the President of the Liberation Committee of the Hungarian National Uprising. Arrested in November, sentenced to death by a military court and executed in December.

BÁRDOS, FERENC (1880–1959) leading social-democrat politician. President of the Central Federation of the Iron- and Metal Workers after 1910. Between 1928 and 1934 a Member of Parliament.

BARDOSSY, LÁSZLÓ (1890–1946) bourgeois politician. Prime Minister and Foreign Minister from April 1941 to March 1942. One of those mainly responsible for Hungary joining Hitler in the attack on the Soviet Union. A People's Tribunal sentenced him to death in 1946.

BENCS, ISTVÁN (1889–?) bourgeois politician. Head of the department of social policy to the Prime Minister's Office during the early 1920's.

BETHLEN, ISTVÁN, Count (1874–1947) bourgeois politician. One of those directing the organization of the counter-revolution in 1919. Held the office of Prime Minister from 1921 to 1931. During the Second World War he was in favour of an Anglo-Saxon orientation and against the pro-German government.

BOGÁR, IGNÁC (1876–1933) social democrat, later communist. An official of the printers' union. Held a leading official post in the Hungarian Republic of Councils and was imprisoned after its defeat. In 1921 due to an exchange of prisoners, he got to Soviet Russia where he worked as the director of a printing office.

BOKÁNYI, DEZSŐ (1871–1940) social democrat, later a communist leader. One of the founders of the stonecutters' craft society and later of the National Federation of Hungarian Construction Workers. The most popular speaker of the pre-World War One Hungarian labour movement. The first publication of the Communist Manifesto in Hungarian is connected with his name. He was Commissar of Labour in the Hungarian Republic of Councils and a counter-revolutionary court sentenced him to death, but in 1922 he arrived in Soviet Russia after an exchange of prisoners.

BÖHM, VILMOS (1880–1949) social-democrat leader. A functionary of the Iron- and Metal Workers' Union; a secretary of state and later a minister in the 1918–1919 bourgeois democratic republic; a commissar and later commander-in-chief in the Red Army during the Hungarian Republic of Councils. After its defeat, he emigrated and functioned as one of the leaders of a centrist social-democratic group until his return in 1945 to take part in the leadership of the Social Democratic Party. He was appointed ambassador to Sweden in 1946 and in 1948 he resigned from his post.

BUCHINGER, MANÓ (1875–1953) a social-democrat leader. Member of the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, from 1907 its secretary. During the Republic of Councils he abstained from political activity, after its defeat emigrated and worked in the Austrian social-democratic party. Returned to Hungary in 1929 and again became a member of the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. After the liberation he was an advocate of the merger of the two labour parties.

CSERVENKA, MIKLÓS (1871–1920) left-wing social democrat, secretary of the welders' section of the Iron- and Metal Workers' Union. Held economic and political offices during the Hungarian Republic of Councils. After its defeat, he was assassinated by counter-revolutionary terrorists.

DINER-DÉNES, JÓZSEF (1857–1937) bourgeois radical, later a social-democrat publicist. Emigrated after the defeat of the Republic of Councils, worked for the French socialist press and published several historical works.

DOVCSÁK, ANTAL (1879–1962) social-democrat trade-union leader. A Commissar in the Republic of Councils and Vice President of the Revolutionary Governing Council. After the defeat of the Republic of Councils, he was sentenced to prison for life but later was traded to Soviet Russia in an exchange of prisoners. From there he went to Austria and became president of the "Világosság" (Light) group of social-democratic emigrés.

ECKHARDT, TIBOR (1886–1972) bourgeois politician. He founded an extreme rightist racist party together with Gyula Gömbös in 1923. Leader of the oppositionist Independent Small-Holders' Party in the 1930's. After 1941 lived in the USA.

ENGELMANN, PÁL (1854–1916) tinsmith, one of the leading personalities of the Hungarian radical social democracy. In 1889 he was taken into the party leadership. Promoted the craft society movement. Out of the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary in 1894 on account of personality differences.

ESSL, ANDRÁS (1837–1890) a leader of the early Hungarian socialist movement. Participated in founding the General Workers' Society and later became its president. A pioneer of the creation of an independent Hungarian labour party.

ESZTERGÁLYOS, JÁNOS (1873–1941) a social-democrat leader. Member of Parliament between the two world wars and editor of the *Népszava* during the 1930's.

FARKAS, ISTVÁN (1869–1944) a social-democrat leader. After the turn of the century he was general secretary of the leatherworkers' union and one of the leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. In 1944 he was taken to Dachau concentration camp by the German fascists.

FARKAS, KÁROLY (1843–1907) ironworker, one of the pioneers of the Hungarian socialist movement; chief delegate of the First International to Hungary; founded the *Munkás Heti Krónika* (Workers' weekly chronicle) and the Hungarian Workers' Party.

FERENCZI, IMRE (? – ?) jurist, social politician, head of the social-policy section of Budapest's City

Council before the First World War; in the 1920's represented the Hungarian government in the International Labour Organization.

FRANKEL, LEÓ (1844–1896) a socialist leader, head of the committee on labour and commercial affairs during the Paris Commune and member of the General Council of the First International. Participated in the founding of the Hungarian General Workers' Party. Emigrated abroad during the 1880's and was active in the Austrian and French labour movements and in the founding of the Second International and its activities.

FRIEDRICH, ISTVÁN (1883–1951) bourgeois politician. In August 1919 overthrew the so-called "trade-union government" with an armed group. Prime Minister from August 7, 1919 to November 22 and then Minister of War for a short period. A Member of Parliament until 1939.

FÜRST, SÁNDOR (1903–1932) a clerk and a communist leader. After 1929 was in charge of directing the activities of the communists working in the unions; during that time he was a member of the secretariat of the illegal Hungarian Party of Communists. Arrested in 1932 and after a summary court trial was sentenced to death and executed.

GARAMI, ERNŐ (1876–1936) leader of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary from the turn of the century to 1919; between 1905 and 1918 the editor-in-chief of *Népszava*. Minister of Commerce during the bourgeois democratic republic. He did not accept the March 1919 merger of the two labour parties nor did he accept the dictatorship of the proletariat and emigrated. He spent most of the counter-revolutionary era abroad and only occasionally could he cooperate with the right-wing social-democrat leadership of the time.

GARBAI, SÁNDOR (1879–1947) a social-democrat leader. One of the founders and leaders of the National Federation of Hungarian Construction Workers. President of the Revolutionary Governing Council at the time of the Hungarian Republic of Councils, following the defeat of which he emigrated and took part in the activities of the "Világosság" (Light) group and later founded a group called "Előre" (Forward). Became estranged from the socialist movement during the Second World War.

GÁSPÁR, SÁNDOR (1917–) communist party and trade-union leader. After the liberation, one of the leaders of the Iron- and Metal Workers Union; in 1953 he was deputy general secretary of the National Council of Trade Unions and later, with some interruptions, its general secretary to this day.

GÖMBÖS, GYULA (1886–1936) bourgeois politician. At the time of the Republic of Councils he was one of the organizers of the counter-revolution and a leader of the white terror. Minister of War from 1929 to 1932 after which he was Prime Minister until his death. Directed his efforts toward the total introduction of fascism and the liquidation of the trade unions.

GYÖRKI, IMRE (1886–1958) a leading social-democrat politician. A Member of Parliament during the 1920's and 1930cs; after 1935 a member of the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. After the liberation belonged to the right wing of the Social Democratic Party.

HABSBURG, KÁROLY [KARL] IV (1887–1922). King of Hungary and Bohemia and, as Karl the First, Emperor of Austria. Inherited the throne on November 21, 1916 from Franz Joseph. Was forced to resign in the course of the revolutionary events of November 1918 when the monarchy disintegrated.

HACKSPACHER, ISTVÁN (1883–1857) a social-democrat, later separatist union politician. As secretary of the turners' section of the Central Federation of Iron- and Metal Workers he persuaded the majority of that section to split off from the Federation and form an independent union. They returned a few years later and Hackspacher left the socialist movement.

HEVESI, GYULA (1890–1970) a communist leader. At the end of the First World War he headed the leftist movement of technical intelligentsia and was a commissar during the Republic of Councils. After its defeat emigrated to the Soviet Russia where he worked in the field of the organization of industry. Returned to Hungary in 1948 where he held various political and scholarly posts.

HLEPKÓ, EDE (1883–1938) a left-wing social democrat, later a communist. Organized the anti-militarist movement during the First World War; in November 1918 participated in the

founding of the Hungarian Party of Communists. Emigrated after the defeat of the Republic of Councils and after 1922 lived in the Soviet Union.

HONT, FERENC (1907–) communist expert on cultural affairs. Participant in the workers' education movement during the counter-revolutionary period and later organized anti-fascist cultural programs and theatrical performances. Since the liberation he has been active mainly in research on theatre-history.

HOROVITZ, JENŐ (1877–1949) a leading social-democrat politician, a secretary of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and organizer of office employees of private firms. Deputy-Commissar during the Republic of Councils following the defeat of which he emigrated and lived in various West-European countries.

HORTHY, MIKLÓS (1868–1957) an admiral of the Austro-Hungarian Navy, the foremost organizer of the 1919 counter-revolution and the white terror. Regent of Hungary from 1920 to October 15, 1944. The development and twenty-five year long rule of a Hungarian type of fascism is associated with his name.

HORVÁTH, JÁNOS (1851–1942) one of the pioneers of the Hungarian socialist movement, leader of the organization of the capital's cobblers. Belonged to the radical wing of the social-democratic movement, but did not have any particularly significant or leading role after the turn of the century.

HRABJE, JÁNOS (1841–?) one of the early organizers of the General Council of the First International and founder of its Hungarian section; participated in the founding of the General Workers' Society. Retired from politics in 1869.

HUSZÁR, KÁROLY (1882–1941) Christian-socialist politician; Prime Minister from November 1919 to March 1920.

IHRLINGER, ANTAL (1842–1890) one of the leaders of the early Hungarian socialist movement. Participated in the founding and leadership of the General Workers' Society, the Hungarian Workers' Party and, later, the Hungarian General Workers' Party. Belonged to the moderate wing of the movement.

JANCSIK, FERENC (1882–1944) a social democrat, later communist leader. Joined the bolshevik movement while a prisoner of war in Russia and organized revolutionary groups among other prisoners of war. Returned to Hungary in 1918 and took part in the founding of the Hungarian Party of Communists. Commander-in-chief of the Red Guards during the Republic of Councils; imprisoned by the counter-revolution; due to an exchange of prisoners he was taken to Soviet Russia in 1922.

JÁSZAI, SAMU (1859–1927) social-democratic trade-union leader. Participated in the organizing of several unions; from 1903 until his death he was Secretary of the Trade Union Council; in 1920 became a member of the leadership of the International Federation of Trade Unions. Wrote the history of the Hungarian trade-union movement.

JÁSZI, OSZKÁR (1875–1957) sociologist, bourgeois radical politician. Editor of the social science journal *Huszadik Század* (20th Century). One of the leaders of the 1918 bourgeois democratic revolution and of the republic. Emigrated at the time of the Republic of Councils, never to return After 1926 he was a professor at a university in the United States of America.

KABÓK, LAJOS (1884–1944) a social-democrat leader; secretary of the technicians' section of the Central Federation of the Iron- and Metal Workers and general secretary of the union from 1938; assassinated by Hungarian fascists in 1944.

KÁLLAY, MIKLÓS (1887–1967) big estate owner, bourgeois politician. Minister of Agriculture 1932–1935 and Prime Minister from March 1942 to March 1944.

KARIKÁS, FRIGYES (1891–1942) writer, communist leader. Joined the bolshevik movement while in a Russian prisoner of war's camp. Returned in 1918 and participated in the founding of the Hungarian Party of Communists. Political commissar of the Red Army during the Republic of Councils, after the defeat of which he emigrated, returned in 1932 to carry out illegal activities but was arrested and imprisoned. After 1935 lived in the Soviet Union.

KÁROLYI, GYULA, Count (1871–1947) bourgeois politician. President of the counter-revolutionary government that was formed at the time of the Republic of Councils in Szeged, which was under French military occupation. Prime Minister between September 1931 and September 1932.

KATONA, JÁNOS (1907–) a communist politician. Active in the leatherworkers' union; participated in the work of the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee; one of the organizers of the March 15, 1942 anti-fascist demonstrations. After the liberation, active in diplomacy.

KATONA, JÓZSEF (1791–1830) jurist, one of the greatest figures of the Hungarian drama. His main work was *Bánk Bán*, a historical tragedy which forcefully protested against national and social oppression.

KERESZTES-FISCHER, FERENC (1881–1948) lawyer; bourgeois politician. Minister of the Interior between 1931–1935 and 1938–1944.

KERTÉSZ, MIKLÓS (1893–1972) social-democratic trade-union leader; Member of Parliament; General Secretary and later President of the union of office employees of private firms between 1913 and 1948.

KÉTHLY, ANNA (1889–1976) a social-democrat leader. Vice-president of the union of office employers of private firms; Member of Parliament between 1922 and 1948; after the liberation one of the leaders of the right-wing social democrats. Resided abroad after the defeat of the 1956 counter-revolutionary uprising.

KILIÁN, GYÖRGY (1907–1943) one of the leaders of the communist youth movement and of the Hungarian Party of Communists. Imprisoned repeatedly for illegal activities. Lived in the Soviet Union after 1939 and fought in the Red Army after 1941. As a partisan disappeared after a parachute jump in 1943.

KORVIN, OTTÓ (1894–1919) a communist leader. One of the leaders of the anti-militarist movement in 1918. Participated in the founding of the Hungarian Party of Communists; led the political section of the Commissariat of the Interior during the Republic of Councils, after the defeat of which he was sentenced to death and executed.

KOSSA, ISTVÁN (1904–1965) a left-wing social-democrat, later communist leader. Secretary of the transport workers' union during the 1930's. Member of the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Communist Party after the liberation; general secretary of the Trade Union Council between 1945 and 1948. Held various leading government administrative posts between 1948 and 1963.

KOZMA, MIKLÓS (1884–1941) bourgeois politician. Led the intelligence section of the Horthyist counter-revolutionary army in 1919, and in 1920 began to work at the Hungarian News Agency; Minister of the Interior from 1935 to 1937.

KRETOVICS, JÓZSEF (1850–1880) one of the forerunners of the Hungarian socialist movement; participated in founding the General Workers' Society.

KUN, BÉLA (1886–1939) a communist leader. As a prisoner of war in Russia during the First World War he joined the bolshevik movement; returned in 1918 to Hungary where he had a leading role in the founding of the Hungarian Party of Communists. He was the recognized leader of the party, of the socialist revolution and of the Republic of Councils. After the defeat of the Republic of Councils, he emigrated to Austria, then to Soviet Russia where until 1936 he was active in the directing organs of the Hungarian and international communist movement.

KUNFI, ZSIGMOND (1879–1929) a social-democrat leader, one of the most significant publicists of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary since 1907, in the 1918–19 bourgeois democratic republic he was Labour and Public Welfare and later Education Minister and in the Republic of Councils Commissar of Education. After its defeat he lived abroad and led the centrist "Világosság" (Light) group.

KÜLFÖLDI, VIKTOR (1844–1894) one of the leaders of the early Hungarian socialist movement; participated in the activities of the General Workers' Society and in the founding of the Hungarian Workers' Party. During the second half of the 1870's he organized an oppositionist faction in the course of the attempts to form a party and later organized a separate party which contained elements of nationalism.

LAKATOS, GÉZA (1890–1967) colonel-general; Prime Minister between August and October 1944. Sought to exclude Hungary from the anti-Soviet war.

LAKY, DEZSŐ (1887–1962) statistician, university lecturer between 1921 and 1950.

LANDLER, JENŐ (1875–1928) a social-democrat, later communist leader. First came into contact with the labour movement as attorney for the defense of striking railway workers in 1904. Became a member of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the leadership of the union of the railway workers in 1908. One of the organizers of the anti-militarist movement at the time of the First World War. During the Republic of Councils he was a commander of the Red Army and later its Commander-in-Chief. Emigrated after its defeat and took part in the reorganization and leadership of the Hungarian Party of Communists.

LENGYEL, GYULA (1888–1941) a social-democrat, later communist leader. He was Finance Commissar, later director of the distribution of goods to the public and the Red Army's Logistics in the Republic of Councils. Emigrated after its defeat, carried out work in the scientific field and worked in Soviet foreign trade.

LUKÁCS, GYÖRGY (1885–1971) communist philosopher and politician. Joined the Hungarian Party of Communists in December 1918 and participated in the preparations for the socialist revolution. Deputy-Commissar of Education during the Republic of Councils, following the defeat of which he emigrated, carried on massive scholarly activities, participated in the reorganization and leadership of the Hungarian Party of Communists and after 1933 lived in the Soviet Union. Continued his scholarly work in Budapest in 1945. The communist movement had repeatedly criticized the contradictions of his ideological work and political conduct.

MALASITS, GÉZA (1874–1948) a social-democrat leader. Secretary of the Iron- and Metal Workers' Union from 1904 to 1919 and member of the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. Member of Parliament during the counter-revolutionary era. An active member of the right wing of the social democrats between 1945 and 1948.

MATUSKA, SZILVESZTER (? – ?) an officer of a counter-revolutionary terrorist detachment in 1919. On the night of September 13, 1931 he blew up a viaduct, on which the Budapest–Vienna train was passing near the Biatorbágy station and this was exploited by the government to start an anti-communist witch-hunt and declare martial law.

MEZŐFI, VILMOS (1870–1947) social-democrat, later a bourgeois journalist and politician. Expelled from the Social Democratic Party of Hungary in 1900 and founded a separatist labour party which at first attracted some of the unions. This party had increasingly turned away from socialist principles and disintegrated before the First World War.

MIÁKITS, FERENC (1876–1924) a social-democrat leader. One of the founders of the Iron- and Metal Workers' Union; one of its officials since 1907 and its secretary since 1917. Since 1913 until his death a member of the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary.

MIKULIK, JÓZSEF (1889–1933) a communist politician, founding member of the Hungarian Party of Communists. A middle-level government functionary during the Republic of Councils, following the defeat of which he was imprisoned and in 1922 arrived in Soviet Russia as a part of a prisoner exchange.

MÓNUS, ILLÉS (1886–1944) a social-democrat leader. Chief ideologist of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary during the era between the world wars. Rejected the idea of a common front with the communists. Killed by the fascists in the autumn of 1944.

NÓGRÁDI, SÁNDOR (1894–1971) a communist leader. In 1944 Commander of Hungarian partisan camp in the Ukraine and later of the partisans fighting in the Salgótarján area. Held various leading posts, political and military, after the liberation.

PAP, DEZSŐ (1871–1930) a writer on law and social politics; since 1922 he was the Hungarian correspondent of the International Bureau of Labour Affairs.

PEIDL, GYULA (1873–1943) a social-democrat leader. Since the turn of the century until his death, with some interruptions, the leader of the printers' union. Labour and Welfare Minister in the 1918–1919 bourgeois democratic republic. After the resignation of the Revolutionary Governing Council he was the Prime Minister of the so-called "trade-union government". Member of Parliament during the 1920's.

PETRI, PÁL (1881– ?) bourgeois politician. Worked in the Prime Minister's office, later secretary of state; since 1922 a representative in the National Assembly and later in Parliament.

PEYER, KÁROLY (1881–1956) right-wing social-democrat trade-union leader, organizer of the rightist opposition during the Republic of Councils. Minister of the Interior in the "trade-union government"; Welfare and Labour Minister in the counter-revolutionary "concentration" government; in 1921 he had a leading role in the Social Democratic Party of Hungary coming to terms with the counter-revolutionary government. Left the Social Democratic Party in 1947 and, later, left Hungary as well.

POGÁNY, JÓZSEF (1887–1938) a social-democrat, later communist leader. Before and during the First World War engaged in writing Marxist historical, philosophical and aesthetic works. One of the leaders of the bourgeois democratic revolution in 1918; a Commissar of the Republic of Councils and a commander of the Red Army. After the defeat emigrated and was active in the communist movements of Soviet Russia, the USA and other countries.

RÁKOSI, MÁTYÁS (1892–1971) a communist leader. Participated in the revolutionary organizing of Hungarian prisoners of war in Russia. Returned to Hungary in 1918 and became a member of the Hungarian Party of Communists. A Commissar, later Commander of the Red Guards in the Republic of Councils, after the defeat of which he emigrated; returned in 1924 to carry out illegal work; imprisoned in 1925. Was freed in 1940 after Soviet intervention on his behalf and went to the Soviet Union. Returned in 1945 and as General Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party he held the post of a Minister of State, a Deputy Prime-Minister and later Prime Minister. Committed grave errors during the dictatorship of the proletariat which distorted and weakened the new system. Dismissed from his party-leadership post in the summer of 1956.

RASSAY, KÁROLY (1887–1958) bourgeois liberal politician. Member of Parliament, sat in the opposition during the Horthy era; editor of a paper. During the Second World War advocated an Anglo-Saxon political orientation.

RATKÓ, ANNA (1903–) a social-democrat, later communist leader. General Secretary of the textile workers' union in 1945. Vice-President of the Trade Union Council 1945–1949. Minister of Welfare (which later became the Ministry of Health), 1949–1953. Since 1956 President of the textile-industry workers' union.

RÉVAI, JÓZSEF (1898–1959) a communist leader, founding member of the Hungarian Party of Communists. Mainly engaged as a political writer during the Republic of Councils. After its defeat he emigrated and took part in the reorganization of the party. Returned to Hungary to carry out underground work, got arrested and sentenced to prison. In 1934 went to the Soviet Union where he was engaged in ideological and political work. After the liberation returned to Hungary where he filled leading party and government posts and carried out significant scholarly activities as well.

RÓNAI, ZOLTÁN (1880–1940) a social-democrat leader. Carried out important sociological investigations after the turn of the century. Commissar of Justice during the Republic of Councils. After its defeat emigrated and became one of the leaders of the centrist "Világosság" (Light) group. Later worked at the secretariat of the Socialist Workers' International in Brussels. Committed suicide after the Nazis invaded Belgium.

RUBINEK, GYULA (1865–1922) bourgeois politician. Secretary of the society representing the interests of the big landowners and a Member of Parliament after 1901. From August 1919 Minister of Agriculture and from July 1920 to December of the same year Minister of Trade and Commerce.

SALLAI, IMRE (1897–1932) a communist leader. Participated in the anti-militarist movement during the last phase of the First World War and in the founding of the Hungarian Party of Communists. Worked in the Commissariat of the Interior during the Republic of Councils; after its defeat emigrated and carried out various political and scholarly activities and on several occasions carried out illegal leadership tasks in Hungary. Arrested in 1932 and sentenced to death by a summary court.

SCHIFFER, PÁL (1911–   ) a social-democrat, later communist journalist and politician. Urged unity of action between the two labour parties during the Second World War and fought for the merger of the two after the liberation. Held various government posts in the people's democracy.

SCHWARTZ, ALADÁR (? – ?) leader of the locksmiths who split off from the Iron- and Metal Workers' Union in 1924.

SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, JÓZSEF (1891– ?) head of the political section of the Budapest police headquarters and director of the police-terror against the communists during the counter-revolutionary period.

SOMOGYI, MIKLÓS (1896–   ) a social-democrat, later communist leader. Member of the leadership of the construction workers' union since 1928 and its President between 1942 and 1950. Joined the Hungarian Party of Communists in 1940. Member of the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee and one of the leaders of the March 15, 1942 anti-fascist demonstration. Between 1955 and 1965 President of the National Council of Trade Unions.

STERN, SIMON (1858–1890) a participant in the early socialist movement in Hungary; member of the radical group of the General Workers' Party.

STRÓBEL, ANTAL (? – ?) forerunner of the Hungarian socialist workers' movement. One of the founders of the Pest-Buda Workers' Education Society and later its president; member of the Pest-section of the First International.

SZABÓ, ERVIN (1877–1918) Marxist social scientist, the most significant revolutionary leader of the era. Wrote significant philosophical and ideological works; after 1904 sharply attacked social-democratic reformists. After 1905 he spread the doctrine of revolutionary syndicalism. Carried out anti-militarist activities during the First World War and was the ideological fountain head of all left-oppositionist and revolutionary groups that appeared in the movement. His followers and pupils became militants of the Hungarian Party of Communists in 1918–1919.

SZABÓ, JÓZSEF (1889– ?) before the First World War one of the leaders of the Christian-socialist trade-union movement. National Assembly representative after 1920.

SZAKASITS, ÁRPÁD (1888–1965) a social-democrat, later communist leader. Active in the union movement before the First World War and worked for the social-democratic press. Headed a section of the Commissariat of the Interior during the Republic of Councils; imprisoned after its defeat. Member of the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary after 1925 and General Secretary of the party between 1938–1942. Between 1928 and 1938 he was president of the construction workers' union and after 1940 editor-in-chief of the *Népszava*. Favoured the popular-front type of cooperation between the two labour parties. After the liberation he again became the General Secretary of the Social Democratic Party; a Deputy-Prime Minister; President of the Presidential Council of the Hungarian People's Republic 1948–1950. After 1959 he was the President of the World Federation of Hungarians.

SZÁLASI, FERENC (1897–1946) "Führer" of the fascist Arrow-Cross Party. Horthy appointed him Prime Minister on October 16, 1944 and entrusted him with the rights of a head of state. He carried out a vast campaign of terror during the last months of the counter-revolutionary order. Sentenced to death as a war criminal and executed in 1946.

SZÁNTÓ, BÉLA (1881–1951) a left-wing social-democrat, later communist leader. One of the leaders of the socialist movement among commercial clerks and office workers. Belonged to the left-wing opposition in the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. Participated in the founding of the Hungarian Party of Communists in 1918; a Commissar in the Republic of Councils. After its defeat, he emigrated and worked at the Moscow headquarters of the Profintern. Returned to Hungary in 1945, worked as a diplomat and published several works on the history of the labour movement.

SZATON, REZSŐ (1888–1957) a left-wing social-democrat, later communist leader. Before the First World War he organized the iron- and metalworkers' struggle for better wages; after December 1918 he was a communist agitator. A Deputy-Commissar during the Republic of Councils; imprisoned after its defeat, escaped after two years and emigrated. After 1923 worked as a party functionary in the Soviet Union. Returned to Hungary in 1946 and until his retirement had a high-level job with air transport.

SZENDE, PÁL (1879–1934) bourgeois radical politician, writer on economics and sociology.

SZTÓJAY, DÖME (1883–1946) general. Hungarian Ambassador in Berlin 1936–1944. March–August 1944 Prime Minister during the German occupation. Sentenced to death and executed in 1946 as a war criminal.

TÁNCSICS, MIHÁLY (1799–1884) outstanding representative of Hungarian revolutionary democracy. Leader of the plebeian wing of the 1848 bourgeois revolution and editor of the *Munkások Ujsága* (Workers' paper). He was in hiding for years after the defeat of the war of independence and wrote radical, utopian socialist works. In prison between 1860 and 1867 when he was given an amnesty. Started the *Arany Trombita* (Golden trumpet) weekly paper and placed it at the disposal of the General Workers' Society of which he was President 1869–1870. He followed the development of the young labour movement with sympathy and supported the creation of an independent labour party.

TELEKI, PÁL, Count (1879–1941) bourgeois politician. One of the leaders of the counter-revolutionary movement in 1919. Prime Minister 1920–1921 and 1939–1941. Committed suicide on April 3, 1941.

TILDY, ZOLTÁN (1889–1961) bourgeois politician, one of the leaders of the Independent Small-Holders' Party. After 1936 sat in the opposition as Member of Parliament. Member of the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee, in 1944 joined the Hungarian Front. Prime Minister after November 1945 and President of the Republic 1946–1948. Participated in the counter-revolutionary government in 1956.

TISZA, KÁLMÁN (1830–1902) bourgeois politician, Prime Minister 1875–1890.

VÁGI, ISTVÁN (1883–1940) a left-wing social-democrat, later communist leader. Active in the construction workers' union before the First World War. During the Republic of Councils he was the political commissar of the construction workers' battalion of the Red Army. One of the leaders of the trade-union opposition in the 1920's. In cooperation with the leadership of the Hungarian Party of Communists in 1925 he participated in the founding of the legal revolutionary party under the name of Socialist Workers' Party of Hungary. Imprisoned repeatedly. After his release he emigrated to the Soviet Union where he worked in the leadership of the Profintern.

VÁGÓ, BÉLA (1881–1939) a left-wing social-democrat, later communist leader. Before and during the First World War he belonged to the left-wing opposition of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. Participated in the founding of the Hungarian Party of Communists. A commissar during the Republic of Councils; after its defeat emigrated, since 1933 lived in the Soviet Union and edited the Hungarian-language magazine *Sarló és Kalapács* (Hammer and sickle).

VANCZÁK, JÁNOS (1870–1932) a social-democrat leader. Secretary of the Iron- and Metal Workers' Union 1904–1920. Belonged to the rightist opposition during the Republic of Councils. Editor-in-chief of the *Népszava* after 1920 and in that capacity offered to cooperate with the Horthy regime in the name of the workers.

VÁNTUS, KÁROLY (1879–1927) a social-democrat, later communist leader. Joined the bolshevik movement during the First World War as a prisoner of war in Russia. Returned in 1918 and took part in founding the Hungarian Party of Communists. A Commissar during the Republic of Councils. Sentenced to death after its defeat, but later due to an exchange of prisoners he was taken to the Soviet Union where he worked in the state administration and helped edit the *Sarló és Kalapács* magazine.

VARGA, JENŐ [EUGENE VARGA] (1879–1964) economist, social democrat, later communist. Already before the First World War he had written significant scientific works. A Commissar during the Republic of Councils and President of the Economic Council. Emigrated after the defeat and became involved in the activities of the Communist International, also continued his scientific work. Head of the World Political Institute in Moscow 1927–1947.

VÁRKONYI, ISTVÁN (1852–1918) an agrarian-socialist leader. Became a member of the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary in 1896 but in 1897 opposed the party's political line for which he was expelled and he then founded the Independent Socialist Party which organized a large-scale radical peasant movement at the end of the 1890's. Várkonyi's ideas were a mixture

of utopian socialism, petite bourgeois democratism and anarchism. This ideological-political chaos led to the disintegration of his movement.

WELTNER, JAKAB (1873–1936) a social-democrat leader. A secretary of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary from 1898 to 1905. Worked with the *Népszava*, its assistant editor after 1909, editor-in-chief after October 1918. Accepted the March 1919 merger of the two labour parties but made the *Népszava* the mouthpiece of the rightist opposition (of the Republic of Councils). Emigrated after the defeat, returned in 1924 and once again took over the editing of *Népszava*. Member of Parliament from 1931 until his death.

ZGYERKA, JÁNOS (1903–) a communist trade-union leader. Became a member of the Hungarian Party of Communists in 1928. Since the end of the 1930's member of the steering committee of the Miners' Union. Leader of one of the groups of miner-partisans during the last phase of the war. General Secretary of the Miners' Union 1945–1958, since 1958 its President.

CHRONOLOGY

1848 – March 15:	Outbreak of the Hungarian bourgeois revolution
1848 – April 2:	First issue of Mihály Táncsics's *Munkások Ujsága* (Workers' paper) appeared
1848 – May 13:	The printers of Pest achieved the first collective agreement with their employers that was also the first in all of Hungary
1862 – May 29:	The Pest-Buda printers' relief society begins to function
1866 – July 22:	Founding meeting of the Pest-Buda Printers' Self-Education Society
1868 – February 17:	Announcement of the establishment of the General Workers' Society
1868 – July 12:	Formation of the First General Cobblers' Society
1869 – May 1:	The first issue of *Typographia*, the trade paper of the printers, appeared
1871 – February 23:	Announcement of the formation of the Upholsterers' Craft Society of Pest and its affiliation to the General Workers' Society
1871 – March 15:	Formation of the Pest Hatmakers' Society as an affiliate of the General Workers' Society
1871 – March:	Formation of the craft society section of the General Workers' Society
1871 – June 11:	The General Workers' Society organizes a demonstration in solidarity with the principles of the Paris Commune
1872 – February 27:	The First Hungarian Industrial Act comes into effect abolishing the guilds
1872 – April 13 – May 1:	The "Disloyalty Trial" directed against the leadership of the General Workers' Society
1873 – January 5:	Appearance of the first issue of the *Munkás Heti Krónika* (after 1880 called the *Népszava*)
1873 – April 13:	Formation of the Budapest carpenters' craft society
1873 – May 4:	A meeting of Budapest's bakers announces the formation of their craft society
1873 – September 21:	A meeting of Budapest's furriers announces the formation of their craft society
1875 – May 2:	Announcement of the Ministry of the Interior's decree No. 1508/1875 concerning regulations on the formation of workers' societies
1877 – March 4:	A meeting of Budapest's bricklayers announces the formation of their craft society
1877 – March 4:	A meeting of Budapest's iron- and metalworkers announces the foundation of their craft society

1877 – October 5:	Formation of the Budapest Journeymen Carpenters' craft society
1879 – November 14:	A meeting of Budapest's iron- and hardware workers announces the formation of their craft society
1880 – May 16–17:	Founding Congress of the Hungarian General Workers' Party
1880 – June 13:	Formation of Budapest's journeymen-blacksmiths' craft society
1881 – December 26:	A meeting of Újpest's tanners announces the formation of their craft society
1884 – May 18:	The second Hungarian Industrial Act comes into effect, it fixed 16 hours a day as the maximum workday, prohibited the so-called Truck system and made strikes illegal
1890 – January 5:	At a meeting of Budapest's tinsmiths, the formation of their craft society is announced
1890 – March 9:	A members' meeting of Budapest's journeymen stonemasons' craft society announces their becoming a national federation
1890 – April 1:	Appearance of the first issue of the *Kőfaragó* (Stonecutter), the craft bulletin of the Hungarian stonemasons and construction workers
1890 – April 17:	At a meeting of Budapest's journeymen butchers, the formation of their craft society is announced
1890 – May 1:	The Hungarian working class and the workers of other countries celebrate May Day for the first time
1890 – July 20:	At a meeting of Budapest's iron-founders the formation of their craft society is announced
1890 – July 20:	Formation of the Hungarian tinsmiths', plumbers' and gas-fitters' craft society
1890 – November 1–2:	Formation of the Hungarian stonecutters' national craft society is announced at their national congress
1890 – December 7–8:	First Congress of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary
1891 – March 8:	A meeting of the carpenters decides on the formation of a national craft society
1891 – April 1:	Appearance of the first issue of the *Cipész* (Cobbler), the craft-bulletin of the Hungarian cobblers and bootmakers
1891 – April 25:	Formation of their craft society is announced at a meeting of Budapest's bookbinders
1891 – July 12:	Appearance of the first issue of the *Asztalosok Szaklapja* (Joiners' craft journal), the craft bulletin of the Hungarian journeymen joiners and assistants
1891 – September 13:	Announcement of the formation of their national craft society at a meeting of Budapest's potters
1891 – October 25:	Announcement of the formation of their craft society at a meeting of Budapest's gold- and silversmiths
1891 – November 29:	The journeymen joiners of Budapest establish a resistance fund
1891 – December:	The leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary establishes the first Trade Union Council
1892 – April 18:	The journeymen carpenters of Budapest decide to establish a national craft society at their meeting
1892 – September 18:	The founding members' meeting of the Budapest tailors' craft society
1893 – May 1:	Appearance of the first issue of *Szabók Szaklapja* (Tailors' craft journal), the craft bulletin representing the interests of the tailors and craft small industries
1894 – May 13–14:	First National Congress of the iron- and metalworkers, held in Budapest

1895 – April 15:	Appearance of the first issue of the *Kőműves* (Bricklayer), the craft and social bulletin of the Hungarian bricklayers
1895 – July 14:	Announcement of the formation of the Hungarian Book Printers' and Type-casters' Craft Society at a general meeting of printers
1896 – April 1:	First issue of the *Ácsok Szaklapja* (Carpenters' craft journal) is published; it is the craft and social bulletin of the Hungarian carpenters
1896 – December 15:	The *Kőműves, Kőfaragó* and *Ácsok Szaklapja* are merged. The *Épitőmunkás'* (Construction worker) first issue is published which is a union, craft and social bulletin representing the interests of the Hungarian construction workers
1897 – September 2:	Appearance of the first issue of the *Vas- és Fémmunkások Szaklapja* (Iron- and metalworkers' craft journal), the bulletin of the Hungarian iron- and metalworkers
1898 – January 2:	A Budapest conference of the craft organizations starts the Trade Union Council once again which from this date on functions smoothly
1898 – February 11:	First issue of the *Világszabadság* (Universal freedom), the bulletin of the Hungarian farmworkers and small-holders, is published
1898 – May 21–22:	The first national congress of the Hungarian craft societies and trade unions with the participation of 37 Budapest and national and 24 rural craft societies' delegates debates the questions of the national movement, the economic, social and educational tasks of the unions and decides on the organization and responsibilities of the Trade Union Council
1901 – April 27:	Publication of the first issue of the *Famunkások Szaklapja* (Woodworkers craft journal), the craft and social bulletin of the Hungarian joiners, carpenters, turners, coopers and cartwrights
1901 – December 25–27:	Second national congress of the Hungarian craft and workers' educational societies, with the participation of 42 Budapest and national and 46 rural craft societies' delegates. On the agenda were such items as workers' protection, the right to strike, workers' insurance, international connections, etc.
1902 – June 22:	Founding members' meeting of the Central Federation of the Hungarian Iron- and Metal Workers
1903 – January 4:	Founding members' meeting of the National Federation of Hungarian Construction Workers
1903 – December 26–27:	National miners' conference in Budapest
1904 – April 15:	Appearance of the first issue of the *Magyar Vasutas* (Hungarian railwayman), the bulletin of the Hungarian railway workers
1904 – July 3:	Founding members' meeting of the National Federation of Woodworkers
1904 – September 1:	Appearance of the first issue of the *Szakszervezeti Értesitő* (Trade-union bulletin), the official bulletin of the Hungarian Trade Union Council
1904 – December 25–26:	Third national congress of the Hungarian trade unions with the participation of 104 delegates representing 50,000 organized workers. On the agenda are questions dealing with the movement, the strikes, boycotts, workers' protection and job referrals
1905 – April 1:	The *Népszava*, the paper of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, becomes a daily

1905 – April 1:	Appearance of the first issue of the *Bőrmunkás* (Leather worker), a social paper representing the interests of all workers engaged in the Hungarian leather industry
1905 – May 20:	Founding members' meeting of the Federation of the Hungarian Textile Workers
1905 – June 25:	Founding members' meeting of the National Federation of the Food Industry Workers
1905 – September 15:	"Red Friday" – a major demonstration of Budapest's workers for the right to vote, with 100,000 taking part
1905 – December 25–26:	Founding members' meeting of the General Federation of Hungarian Leather Workers
1906 – January 7:	Founding members' meeting of the National Federation of Agrarian Workers
1906 – January 7:	Founding members' meeting of the Hungarian Millers' and Assistants' Craft Society
1906 – May 6:	Founding members' meeting of the National Federation of Railway Workers
1906 – May 6:	Founding members' meeting of the Federation of Hungarian Chemical Workers
1907 – March 6:	The Minister of the Interior suspends the activities of the bricklayers' section of the Federation of Construction Workers
1907 – March 8:	The Minister of the Interior suspends the activities of the iron- and copper-furniture workers' craft society
1907 – June 10:	The Minister of the Interior orders the bricklayers' section of the Federation of Construction Workers to be disbanded
1907 – October 10:	"Red Thursday" – a national political strike and demonstration for the universal suffrage, with nearly 200,000 participants
1908 – January 5–7:	Fourth Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions with the participation of 206 delegates representing 130,000 organized workers. On the agenda were items about collective agreements, the right to strike and to form unions, modification of the Trade Union Council's charter, etc.
1908 – October 4–6:	Extraordinary Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions with the participation of 134 delegates representing 140,000 organized workers. On the agenda was the stand of the unions in the face of the planned new industrial legislation
1908 – November 9:	The Minister of Commerce orders the National Federation of Railway Workers to be disbanded
1908 – December 29:	The Minister of the Interior suspends the activities of the Federation of Iron- and Metal Workers
1909 – April 9:	The Minister of the Interior allows the Federation of Iron- and Metal Workers to resume its functions
1911 – August 10–12:	International Trade Union Conference in Budapest with the participation of representatives of seventeen countries and six million organized workers
1911 – August 13–15:	Fifth Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions with the participation of 100 delegates representing 91,000 organized workers. Items like unemployment, workers' insurance, and workers' protection were on the agenda
1912 – March 21:	The Minister of the Interior suspends the activities of the National Federation of Food Industry Workers
1912 – May 23:	"Bloody Thursday" – general political strike, demonstration and bloody clashes in the streets of Budapest and several rural towns for the universal suffrage

1913 – September 4:	Appearance of the first issue of the *Bányamunkás* (Miner)
1913 – December 14:	An extraordinary congress of the Hungarian unions discusses the tasks of the struggle against unemployment
1916 – January 17:	The Minister of Defense issues the first decree concerning the Labour Grievance Committee
1916 – June 18:	A conference of union representatives discusses the preparedness of the unions to meet their post-war tasks
1917 – August 19–20:	Sixth Congress of the Hungarian Unions with the participation of 96 Budapest and 12 rural representatives delegated by 200,000 organized workers. On the agenda were items dealing with economic transition, international socio-political questions, etc.
1917 – November 25:	Solidarity demonstration by the capital's workers, supporting the Russian socialist revolution
1917 – November 30:	The start of the National Union of Employed Engineers
1918 – May 25–26:	Extraordinary Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions with the participation of 208 delegates representing 300,000 organized workers. On the agenda were socio-political demands and the right to organize and assemble
1918 – June 20–27:	General political strike in Hungary
1918 – September 21–23:	First Congress of the Hungarian Miners' Federation
1918 – October 30–31:	Bourgeois democratic revolution in Hungary
1918 – November 2:	Formation of the Budapest Workers' Council
1918 – November 9:	Formation of the Doctors' Union
1918 – November 24:	Formation of the Hungarian Party of Communists
1918 – November 24:	The Federation of Hungarian Railway Workers is reestablished
1918 – December 10:	The collective of shop stewards of the Iron- and Metal Workers' Federation states that it is not opposed to their members also being members of the Hungarian Party of Communists
1918 – December 16:	Formation of the Hungarian Teachers' Union
1918 – December:	The bourgeois democratic government introduces state unemployment relief and places it at the unions' disposal
1918 – December 31:	The total number of union members in Hungary passes the 700,000 mark
1919 – January:	Movement to occupy the factories in Budapest and its vicinity
1919 – February 11:	A government decree on the plant steering committees
1919 – March 7:	The Budapest Workers' Council adopts a resolution on the immediate initiation of socialization
1919 – March 20:	A general printers' strike in the capital. The leftist leadership of the strike committee is entrusted with the direction of the Budapest organization
1919 – March 21:	The Hungarian Party of Communists and the Social Democratic Party of Hungary merge. The Hungarian Republic of Councils is declared
1919 – April–May:	Mobilization of the unions for the Red Army
1919 – April–early June:	Debates on the place and role of the unions in the dictatorship of the proletariat – union membership approaches the 1,500,000 figure
1919 – May 13–22:	Béla Kun gives a five-part lecture series on the Party-program and on the relationship between the Party and the unions
1919 – May 19:	Decree of the Revolutionary Governing Council concerning the organization of the National Economic Council
1919 – June 2:	First meeting of the National Economic Council's Steering Committee; its members are union delegates

1919 – June 14–23:	National Meeting of Councils, which accepts the Constitution. Among its points is one specifying the role of the trade unions in the direction of the economy
1919 – August 1:	The overthrow of the Hungarian Republic of Councils. Right-wing union leaders form a government
1919 – August 6:	The "trade-union government" is removed by the counter-revolutionary group of István Friedrich
1919 – August 13:	The counter-revolutionary government abolishes the state unemployment relief
1919 – August 24:	Reorganization of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary
1920 – June 20–August 8:	International trade-union boycott against the counter-revolutionary regime in Hungary
1920 – July 29:	The Hungarian Railway Workers' Federation is again disbanded
1920 – August 8–September 10:	A delegation of the International Bureau of Labour Affairs examines the situation of union freedoms in Hungary
1920 – October 24:	National Conference of Hungarian Trade Unions with the participation of 247 delegates representing 215,000 organized workers. Such items as the economic situation of the workers and workers' insurance were discussed
1921 – December 4:	Extraordinary Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions with the participation of 336 delegates. The situation of the workers and employees and the rights of assembly and to organize were discussed
1921 – December 22:	The signing of the agreement between the government and the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary (the Bethlen–Peyer pact)
1922 – August 17–28:	General strike of the iron and machine industry workers in Budapest and vicinity
1923 – February 27–March 24:	The nation's some 60,000 iron- and metalworkers go on strike and achieve significant wage increases
1923 – March 25–27:	Seventh Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions with the participation of 228 delegates representing 220,000 organized workers. They discussed such items as economic conditions and wages, workers' protection, workers' insurance, ways of organizing, etc.
1924 – March 30:	National Conference of the Hungarian Trade Unions concerning the rights to assemble and to organize
1924 – April 7–May 5:	Budapest's printers go on strike
1924 – May:	The majority of the organized iron and metal turners leave the Central Federation of Iron- and Metal Workers
1925 – April 14:	Formation of the Socialist Workers' Party of Hungary
1926 – March 28–29:	Eighth Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions with the participation of 129 delegates representing 126,000 workers. On the agenda were items dealing with socio-political questions and with the rights to assemble and to organize
1926 – April 27:	Hunger-march of the miners of Salgótarján
1928 – November:	Miners' strike in Pécs, Salgótarján and Pilis
1928 – December 11:	Hunger-march of the miners of Pilisvörösvár
1929 – November 1:	Sharp clashes between the militant class-conscious miners and the reformists at the extraordinary congress of the Miners' Federation
1930–1931:	Series of strikes off and on at the Ganz Works to protest against the introduction of the Bedeaux system

1930 – March 23–25:	Ninth Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions with the participation of 108 delegates representing 110,000 workers. On the agenda were such items as socio-politics, the eight-hour workday, dismissals in the course of reorganization and also the determination of the functional framework of the unions
1930 – September 1:	100,000 workers of Budapest demonstrate against fascism and unemployment
1931 – February 8:	Extraordinary Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions with the participation of 232 delegates. (Union membership is at 88,780.) Unemployment and workers' protection is on the agenda
1931 – February:	Formation of the United Union Opposition
1932 – June 6:	Oppositionist leaders of the iron- and metalworkers arrested
1933 – January:	Strikes in the textile industry protesting against the introduction of the Bedeaux system
1933 – February 17:	Several leaders of the United Union Opposition are arrested by the police
1933 – September:	The Central Committee of the illegal Hungarian Party of Communists issues the slogan "Join the Unions!"
1934 – January–February:	The union opposition leads the strike movement in the textile industries of Budapest and vicinity
1935 – March 17:	Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös introduces his plan to disband the unions and to set up workers' chambers
1935 – March:	The Hungarian Party of Communists calls on the leaders and members of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary to jointly defend the unions
1935 – April 14–15:	Five representatives of the Trade Union United Workers' Block were elected to the self-government of the Institute of Social Security
1935 – July 25–August 21:	10,000 construction workers go on strike in the capital and its vicinity. The union opposition has a significant role in directing the successful movement
1935 – September 8–9:	Extraordinary Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions with the participation of 121 delegates. (Union membership is 112,000.) On the agenda were items dealing with the unions' freedom and social security.
1937 – September 26:	Extraordinary Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions with the participation of 215 delegates. (Union membership is 113,000.) On the agenda were items dealing with workers' protection, freedom of organization, workhours and paid holidays, etc.
1938 – December:	The government bans all union papers
1939 – May 12:	The government orders an investigation of the Trade Union Council and of all the unions. Thirty-nine unions are placed under the trusteeship of the Ministry of the Interior
1939 – September 1:	The Teleki government introduces extraordinary measures curtailing the rights to assemble and organize and dealing with the supervision of the press as war conditions set in
1940 – April 1:	Appearance of the first issue of the *Magyar Szakszervezeti Értesitő* (Hungarian trade-union bulletin), the newspaper of the Trade Union Council
1941 – June 22:	Fascist Germany attacks the Soviet Union. The Hungarian government, citing the danger of war, tightens the extraordinary measures and extends martial law to cover strikes as well

1941 – June 27:	The fascist Hungarian government declares war against the Soviet Union
1941 – September 7:	The construction workers disperse the Arrow-Cross goons who attack the construction workers' headquarters
1942 – February:	The Federation of Construction Workers issues a call for the strengthening of the worker–peasant anti-fascist alliance
1942 – March 9:	The conference of union activists supports the call of the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee for a March 15th anti-fascist demonstration
1942 – March 15:	Mass demonstration against fascism in Budapest
1942 – March 19:	Extraordinary Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions. (Union membership is 72,000.) On the agenda are items such as wage and price control; guarantee of minimal wages; the demand for the establishment of plant steering committees, etc.
1942 – April:	On the basis of the denunciations of the fascist phoney workers' organizations several hundred union functionaries are placed in forced labour brigades and taken to the Eastern Front
1943 – May 9:	The agrarian workers' section of the Peasants' Federation is established with the aim of supplementing the activities of the National Federation of Agrarian Workers, which is not allowed to function properly
1943 – September:	The Trade Union Council initiates a recruitment campaign and some 15,000 new members join the unions
1943 – September:	Anti-war demonstration and strikes in Diósgyőr and Csepel
1944 – March 19:	The troops of fascist Germany occupy Hungary
1944 – March 29:	Government commissioners are assigned to every union
1944 – October 10:	The leaders of the two illegal labour parties come to an agreement which also specifies as a goal the creation of a unified union movement
1944 – October 15:	After Horthy's armistice proclamation the Arrow-Cross Party takes over the reigns of power in the not yet liberated zones
1944 – October 18:	The first legal major meeting of the unions held in liberated Szeged
1944 – November – 1945 April:	Formation of plant committees in the industries in the already liberated area of the nation, which supervise production and represent the workers' interests
1944 – December 2:	The Hungarian National Independence Front is established at Szeged with the participation of the democratic parties and the unions
1944 – December 21:	The Provisional National Assembly meets in Debrecen, in which the unions have nineteen representatives
1944 – December – 1945 January:	Actions to protect the plants are undertaken by the organized workers in Borsod, in Budapest and its environs
1945 – January 1:	Appearance of the first issue of *A Munka* (Labour) in Szeged, the weekly bulletin of the unions
1945 – January 18:	Communist and social-democrat union leaders meet in liberated Pest to discuss the re-establishment of the Trade Union Council
1945 – January–March:	The central bodies of the unions begin to function
1945 – February 7:	The new Trade Union Council and the Trade Union Youth Secretariat is formed
1945 – February 20:	The Trade Union Council invites the leaders of the unions to a conference which adopts a position in favour of the unions being politically active

1945 – April 4:	The Soviet Army completely liberates Hungary
1945 – April 24:	Signing of the first collective agreement after the Liberation, that of the iron- and metalworkers
1945 – May Day:	500,000 workers demonstrate in support of democracy and workers' unity in Budapest
1945 – May 5–6:	The founding congress of the National Federation of Agrarian Workers and Small-Holders
1945 – May 20–21:	The Hungarian Communist Party's national conference discusses the union tasks of communists
1945 – June 1:	Appearance of the first issue of the *Szakszervezeti Közlöny* (Trade-union gazette), the official paper of the National Headquarters of the Free Hungarian Trade Unions
1945 – June 15:	The unions issue a call for work competitions to rebuild the nation
1945 – December 2:	The first free congress of the Hungarian trade unions with the participation of 204 delegates representing 850,000 organized workers. On the agenda are items dealing with the reconstruction of the country, a new union charter and election of the leadership
1946 – March 1:	Congress of the Union Youth and Apprentice Movement
1946 – March 5:	The Hungarian Communist Party, the Social Democratic Party, the National Peasant Party and the Trade Union Council together form the Left-Wing Block
1947 – May 17:	The Trade Union Council adopts positions in support of the Three Year Plan, the nationalization of the banks and the tax on capital
1948 – March 20–21:	First national conference of trade-union functionaries with the participation of 747 union leaders. On the agenda are the new tasks of the unions and organizational questions
1948 – March 25:	Nationalization of industrial plants employing over 100 workers
1948 – April 9:	The Trade Union Council welcomes the nationalizations and calls upon the organized workers to support the worker-managers
1948 – June 12:	The two labour parties merge; the founding of the Hungarian Working People's Party
1948 – June 13:	The *Népszava* becomes the unions' central daily paper
1948 – October 17–18:	Seventeenth Congress of the Free Hungarian Trade Unions with the participation of 391 delegates representing 1.6 million organized workers. On the agenda are items such as the tasks of the unions in the construction of socialism, the transition to industrial branch organizing, the development of union democracy, unification of social security, etc.
1948 – December 18–19:	Founding of the National Federation of Working Peasants and Agrarian Workers
1950 – July 4:	The Political Committee of the Hungarian Working People's Party issues a resolution on union work, which subordinates the activities of the unions to the sectarian and dogmatic concepts of the Party leadership
1950 – September 14:	Decree on the reorganization of social security
1952 – January 19–20:	Formation of the Agricultural and Forestry Workers' Union
1953 – February 27 – March 1:	The Eighteenth Congress of the Trade Union with the participation of 604 delegates representing 1,771,000 organized workers. On the agenda are items such as the role of unions in production, in the labour competition movement, their tasks

	in labour safety and health protection as well as the education of new workers
1956 – December 11:	The Plenary of the National Council of Trade Unions adopts a position in support of union autonomy and calls upon the workers to return to law and order and resume union activities after the defeat of the armed counter-revolution (Oct. 23–Nov. 4, 1956)
1957 – September 21:	The National Council of Trade Unions calls upon the workers to begin the labour competition movement again
1958 – February 28 – March 2:	Nineteenth Congress of the Trade Unions with the participation of 579 delegates representing 1,850,000 organized workers. On the agenda are items dealing with the unions' role in the development of the economy and the strengthening of plant democracy. The Congress once again determines the scope of the unions' socio-political and cultural activities
1962 – April 13–14:	First national conference of the leaders of the socialist brigades
1963 – May 9–12:	Twentieth Congress of the Trade Unions with the participation of 576 delegates representing 2,700,000 organized workers. On the agenda are items dealing with the unions' role in the management of the economy and the workers' professional, political and cultural education
1967 – May 3–6:	Twenty-first Congress of the Trade Unions with the participation of 607 delegates representing over 3 million organized workers. On the agenda are items about the delineation of the unions' tasks and enlarged sphere of activity after the bases of socialism have been laid down, while reforms in the management of the economy are under way
1971 – May 4–8:	Twenty-second Congress of the Trade Unions with the participation of 669 delegates representing some 3.5 million organized workers. On the agenda are items about increasing the unions' participation in the management of the economy, in planning, in the preparation of state decisions and supervising the policies concerning the standard of living. The agenda also included the further broadening of the unions' scope in the protection of interests and the more effective use of their rights.

LITERATURE AND ARCHIVE SOURCES USED

These studies are the result of extensive research. The authors considered the material available on each period's general history, labour movement history, economic history, sociological literature, the various types of official and non-official publications, the periodicals of the labour movement and of the employers' organizations as well as the contemporary daily press. Particularly significant is the large-scale incorporation of the archives of the various periods.

As far as the archive sources are concerned the emphasis was on the original material of the labour movement and particularly of the unions. And the documents of the organs of state power, diametrically opposed to the labour movement, shed additional light on the subject.

Here we give the most important sources, irrespective of the fact whether they are mentioned in the studies.

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International Advisory Committee

THE AUTHORS

DR TIBOR ERÉNYI D. SC. (history)–department head of the Institute of Party History. He mainly deals with the history of the Hungarian labour movement at the turn of the century and has published several studies and articles on that subject. He has also published works on the development of the Hungarian socialist movement, the Hungarian connections of the First International and was one of the editors of the series *Magyar Munkásmozgalom Története Válogatott Dokumentumai* (Selected documents of the history of the Hungarian working-class movement). Between 1955 and 1961 he was the responsible editor of the periodical *Párttörténeti Közlemények* (Party-history articles). His larger work on trade-union history was *A magyarországi szakszervezeti mozgalom kezdetei, 1867–1904* (The beginnings of the Hungarian trade-union movement, 1867–1904), Budapest 1962.

ERNŐ KABOS Senior scientific officer of the Institute of Party History. His main area of work is the research and analysis of the Hungarian union movement between 1890 and 1914. He has published several works dealing with aspects of this historical period and a thorough study is presently under way. He has published studies on workers' culture and the history of socialist literature. He was one of the editors of the *Munkásmozgalomtörténeti Lexikon* (Encyclopaedia of the history of the working-class movement), Budapest 1972.

DR JÁNOS KENDE Scientific officer of the Institute of Party History. He has published a book and several articles on the Social Democratic Party's pre-1918 policies toward the nationalities. At present he is working on a monograph on the history of the Hungarian trade-union movement between 1914 and 1919. He has already published studies on aspects of this period. He has participated in the editing of several collections of documents and in that of the *Munkásmozgalomtörténeti Lexikon* (Encyclopaedia of the history of the working-class movement), Budapest, 1972.

DR KÁLMÁN SZAKÁCS C. Sc. (history) – a professor and department head of the Eötvös Loránd University. He specializes in most recent Hungarian history and, within it, the labour movement and twentieth-century agrarian movements. Some of his more important works are: *A kommunista párt agrárpolitikája, 1920–1930* (The agrarian politics of the Communist Party, 1920–1930); *Földmunkás és szegényparaszt mozgalmak* (Agrarian workers' and poor-peasants' movements, 1920–1939); *A mezőgazdasági érdekképviselet kérdései Magyarországon, 1945–1949* (Questions of the representation of interest of agrarian workers in Hungary, 1945–1949); *A KMP népfrontpolitikájának kérdései* (Questions of the popular-front politics of the Hungarian Party of Communists); *Az MSZDP agrárpolitikája és agrárprogramja 1920–1930* (The agrarian policies and agrarian program of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary 1920–1930); *A magyarországi földmunkás szakszervezet megalakulásának előzményei* (The precedents of the formation of the Hungarian agrarian workers' union).

DR PÉTER SIPOS C. Sc. (history) – scientific officer of the Institute of Party History. His area of work covers the histories of the labour movement and politics in general between the two world wars. He has published a work titled *Imrédy Béla és a Magyar Megújulás Pártja* (Béla Imrédy and the Hungarian Rebirth Party), Budapest 1970. In addition to this he has published several studies on Hungarian political history in the 1930's. He has co-authored several histories of factories. He is presently researching the history of the Hungarian union movement during the counter-revolu-

tionary era, 1919–1944. He has already written on several aspects of this and he is working on a full treatment of the subject.

DR GYÖRGY BORSÁNYI C. Sc. (history) – scientific officer of the Institute of Party History. His area of research focusses on the histories of the Communist Party and of the Social Democratic Party between the two world wars. Primarily he concentrated on the world-wide economic crisis (1929–1933) and he has published several articles, studies and document-collections on that period. His book *Munkát! Kenyeret!* (Work! Bread!), Budapest 1971, deals with an analysis of the mass movements that had developed in Hungary during that period.

DR ISTVÁN PINTÉR C. Sc. (history) – senior scientific officer of the Institute of Party History. His main area of research covers the histories of the Hungarian labour movement, the popular-front policy, the resistance and the two labour parties during the 30's and the Second World War. He has also published several articles and studies on these matters. Two of his more significant works are: *Magyar kommunisták a Hitler-ellenes nemzeti egységért, 1941 junius–1944 március* (Hungarian communists for national unity against Hitler, June 1941–March 1944), Budapest 1968, and *A Magyar Front és az ellenállás* (The Hungarian front and the resistance), Budapest 1970.

DR MIKLÓS HABUDA C. Sc. (history) – senior scientific officer of the Institute of Party History and section-head. His area of research is the history of the Hungarian labour movement between 1945 and 1962a He has published several studies and one book, *A magyar szakszervezeti mozgalom a népi demokratikus forradalomban 1944–1948* (The Hungarian trade-union movement and the peoples' democratic revolution, 1944–1948), Budapest 1971, dealing with the development of the Hungarian union movement between 1944 and 1948, with the unions' struggle for workers' power and their place and role in the people's democratic revolution. Presently he is researching the history of the Hungarian working class after 1945.

DR MÁRTON BUZA C. Sc. (economics) – Director of the Trade Unions' Theoretical Research Institute. Research at this Institute is primarily directed at the principles, theories and problems of the unions of our time. His research work is related to this. He is involved in examining the working class and the exercise of its leading role in Hungary. At present his main research is on workers' participation in decision-making and the questions of industrial democracy. On these two themes he has published articles, studies and two books: *A munkásosztály vezető szerepének néhány kérdése* (Some questions on the leading role of the working class), Budapest 1966, and *Az üzemi demokrácia* (Industrial democracy), Budapest 1969.



